

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

باب اول در سرود گلیان و این باب فصل انجید

فصل اول بیت اولِ آله عَلیهِمُ اَعْلٰی عَالَمِ جُودِنِ قَادِرُ

بِهَمِّي قَدْ رَسَّ قَائِمُهُ قَدِيمُ وَالِي وَاحِدُ وَحْدَهُ

مَرَارِقُ رَبِّ رَحِيمُ سَوْسَاةَ سَجُودِنِ بَحِيَّ حَمْدُ

وَرَجَّحَانِ حَمْدُ

تَمَنِّي مَعْدُودِ

فَنِي نَائِيسُ

بُوجِنِ تَن

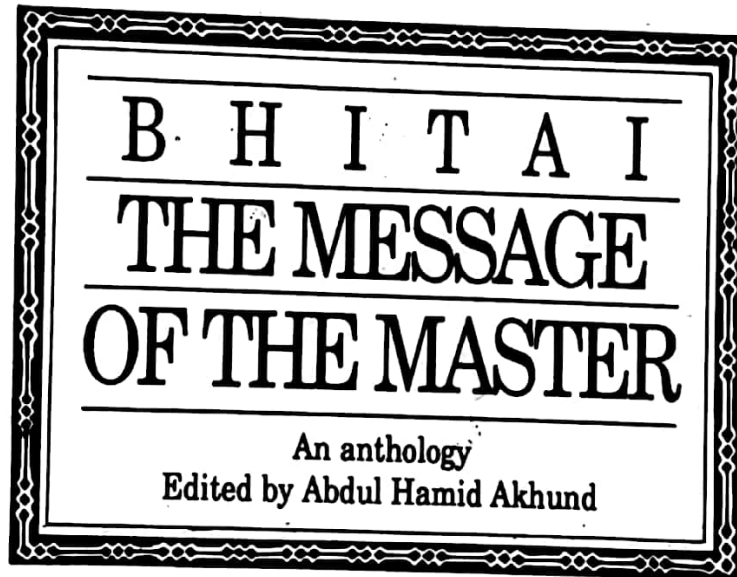
مَنْجُو مُحَمَّدٌ كَاوِنِ هِمَا سَاكُنِ هِيْنِ تَدَةُ مَنجَاتِنِ اَوْتَنِ

كُوْنِ اَوَّلُوْیْتِ وَحَلَّةٍ لَا شَرِيْكَ لَهُ جِنِ اَنْوَسِ اِيْمَانِ

B H I T A I THE MESSAGE OF THE MASTER

An anthology
Edited by Abdul Hamid Akhund

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Studies II



BHITAI
THE MESSAGE
OF THE MASTER

**An anthology of commentaries
on the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif**

**Edited by
Abdul Hamid Akhund**

**Shah Jo Risalo Scheme,
Published during the 249 Urs Celebration of
Shah Abdul Latif**

**1000 Copies
First Edition: August 1993
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PRICE: RS. 200.00

ISBN. 969-81001-13-X

**Published by: Shah Abdul Latif Bhitshah Cultural Centre Committee,
Bhitshah, Hyderabad.**

Printed by: Azad Communications, Karachi. Ph. 7737290

Computer Layout: Agha Riaz Ali Khan

Directorate General, Culture Department.

*'Man is My secret: I am-his'.
Here lies the key to mysteries:
This phrase the singer took to sing
The song he sang before the King:
And when he sang, where there were Two,
The pair to single One-ness grew.*

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Foreword

A scholar of International repute invited from Islamabad to the seminar during the 247th Urs celebrations of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was mesmerised by the peoples response to the artists reciting the works of Shah Abdul Latif. He attended the music recitals of the Urs and moved around Bhitshah to get the feel of the festival, but what he could not understand was the psyche of the people; to him the people of Sindh, with all their reverence for Latif had only politicised his Urs. Little did he understand that to the rustic as well as to the intellectual, Shah Latif is synonymous with Sindh. He is the very fountainhead of Sindh's culture, and his message is as fresh as that of any present day poet. He could not appreciate and understand that the people of Sindh find solace and comfort in Shah's *kalam* in adversity as well as in joy and happiness. This is the socio-cultural truth of Sindh in absolute.

The visitor's grasp of this emotion that has taken years to develop was pitifully short, he was unable to feel the fragile roots that bind the people of Sindh to Shah and resonate with the strings of his *danboor*. His assessment came from a far off place in another time frame, accordingly, he chose to write about his experience during the Urs in an English daily in Islamabad. To him every verse of Shah was political, every slogan atrocious and every emotive gesture rough as sandpaper. So, he smelt conspiracy in everything at Bhitshah. Because he did not understand the language, his shiver of apprehension was self imposed— a dichotomy of thought, from which our country has suffered since its inception; where very little has been done to emulate cultural trends and to develop an under-

Foreword

standing amongst the provinces of Pakistan. This cultural diversity should have become our strongest integrating factor; we fondly refer to sufi saints of all the provinces of Pakistan but very little has actually been done to translate their works into the different languages of Pakistan. Our national institutions talk of introducing our culture to the International audience but they fall short of presenting it to their own people. Precautionary lip service is available, however in abundance, which in turn has become the basis for cultural mistrust. To my mind, it is only through propagating and understanding the works of our sufis, saints and poets that a viable cultural identity can evolve. This is our strongest bond that can open new avenues of tolerance, understanding and harmony. Shah Abdul Latif is thus a familiar syndrome. Through him we can attempt to create a world that shuns caste, colour and creed and binds like the weaver who weaves disparate threads to create a strong fabric.

During the concluding session of the National Seminar on Shah Abdul Latif, held recently in Karachi, Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, Chief Minister Sindh, in his presidential remarks termed Shah Abdul Latif's message as the biggest weapon against hatred, acrimony and antagonism as it imparts tolerance, love and understanding. He directed the Sindh Government to sponsor on an annual basis conferences in all the provincial capitals of Pakistan so as to create awareness and closeness amongst the intellectuals, thinkers and writers of Pakistan.

Over the years the Shah Abdul Latif Bhitshah Cultural Centre Committee has under its research scheme published more than 30 books pertaining to the source material available on Shah Abdul Latif. A number of books have also been published in Urdu, Sindhi and English by the Department of Culture & Tourism which has helped in attracting the attention of scholars from all over the country, but that is not enough. The *Risalo* of Shah Abdul Latif is the pink of perfection and Shah merits a place beside other great Sufis of the world, which can only be done once his works are translated in other languages.

The Government of Sindh in the Planning & Development Department has approved a project, supporting the research & translation works on Shah Abdul Latif and this compendium, which is a collection of articles on the life and works of Shah Abdul Latif including the proceedings of the National Seminar on Shah Abdul Latif held in Karachi on 27th May 1992, is a part of the chain of publications under the project.

The Message of the Master

As people outside Sindh come to understand Shah Abdul Latif, we feel that he will emerge as a major poet of love, tolerance and understanding. The Message of the Master is a link in the chain.

Abdul Hamid Akhund

20th July, 1993

Part I

Proceedings

National Seminar

SHAH ABDUL LATIF

Karachi 27-28 May, 1992

Presidential Address*

Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah

Those of you who know Sindh know very well that over the last hundreds of years the civilization and life form in Sindh evolved with the waters of the Indus and wherever the waters of the Indus flowed with that came the life and the form and figure of the civilization that over the last 100 of years has come to be known as the Indus civilization. More recently for the last 250 years as the Indus waters brought in the growth of civilization and its various forms and manifestations, came one of Sindh's most famous sons, Latif, and he gave a new life and figure form to the cultural manifestations of the land that is known as the Mehran or the Wadee-e-Mehran. He gave a new figure, he gave a new form, he gave it poetry, a combination of God and spiritualism and realism and since the last 250 years wherever you go in Sindh, whether the Thar desert area or the Kohistan area or the commands of the Guddu, the Sukkur or the Kotri, you will hear the music and the poetry, whether Abida Parveen sings it or some other great singer sings it but invariably it is Latif and it will not be out of context to say that Shah Latif is the Poet Laureate of Sindh, and an international poet laureate from any point of view. Therefore, the message that Latif has given in the *Risalo*, in substance, in figure and form is a manifestation of all great poets of the world. Dr. Baloch said that through a combination of Tauhid and through the revelations that he (Latif) has made at the spiritual level, and legends that he has woven around

*Based on the extempore speech on the occasion of National Seminar on Shah Abdul Latif held at Karachi on 27-28 May, 1992.

Sindh's romance, many of them he spun and wove in the natural art form of a language which to the common Sindhi was mysticism, sufism and day to day romance, he struck a rapport with the land that is called Sindh today and I think in this age and time when we are viewing a phenomenon of violence of the forces that have been unleashed amongst our own people I think more than ever before, the relevance of Shah Abdul Latif's message to the people of Pakistan and to the people of Sindh is more important today.

So Shah needs to be looked at, today, by its intellectuals, by its thinkers, by the sons and daughters of Sindh in the context that Shah has contributed perhaps more than any other individual single poet in Sindh and in its entire history of civilization. In fact there has been a considerable nature of work done by both the older generation and the younger generation. The old generation perhaps the late Mr A. K. Brohi, Dr. Baloch; the younger generation perhaps the Secretary of Culture, Mr Abdul Hamid Akhund, but I think what we need to get across basically to the sons and daughters of this great province is that the message and the decodification and translation of the Risalo needs to be done on an urgent basis. This work that has been undertaken by the Research cell basically at Bhitshah. I think, is one of the biggest challenges today that the thinkers and writers, could have undertaken and I would like to congratulate the Culture Department of the Government of Sindh that it is necessary because the message of Latif is not only the message for Sindh, I think it is an international phenomenon. What he has tried to get across basically, the question of the rapport with spiritual forces, with realism, the mysticism that he has combined with the realities of Sindh, its historical background, its culture, the tales that he has woven and spun time and time again, the language that he has used needs to get across the frontiers of Pakistan to men and women of an international age who appreciate all great poets of the world. And therefore I think that on the behalf of the Government of Sindh I would like to commit today to the intellectuals, thinkers of Sindh who have assembled here that any amount of money that is needed for the question of undertaking an exercise of translation will be borne by the Government of Sindh, and also, it is necessary, for, one does not see many participants from the other provinces of Pakistan, but I think it necessary that Latif should go to Lahore and Peshawar and Quetta also, and for that I would suggest for the consideration of the Department of Culture that the Government of Sindh will bear the expenses for such conferences to be organized on an annual basis in

Karachi and other provincial capitals of Pakistan.

I believe the message of this conference must be very clear, precise, and categoric and the message of peace and tolerance that Latif has talked about, and if you go down to the valley of the Mehran on the right and the left bank of the Indus, it has never through the years seen any guns or seen any violence on the banks of the Indus or the meadows of the Indus and therefore what we witness today in Sindh, the hatred and the acrimony and the great antagonism, I think the biggest weapon for that today is the message of Latif, of tolerance, of love, of understanding, and of the romanticism that we witnessed in the 18th century in the minds of men and women and it is this message that has to be taken by those who participate in this conference, thinkers and intellectuals and poets and writers. Every son and daughter of Sindh today has a moral obligation that if you need a message, it is the message of Latif and that message can not be conveyed by anybody better than those who stay in Sindh, who understand the depth of its purity and this is the land of the Sufis. Even today when you go to the *dargah* of Latif or Sachal and listen to the recitals by the singers, you get intoxicated and carried off into a world of your own. Such is the ecstatic power of music and the *dhun* or the rhythm and therefore what you need to change is the rhythm in Sindh, the psyche in Sindh.

We must get out from this great obsession of violence and hatred and come back to the Sindh of Latif and not the Sindh of guns and klashnikov and in that you and us will play a pivotal role, its singers, writers, poets etc. The message of this conference should be to convey in substantive terms the message of Shah Latif which has been and will be both for Sindh and the Federation of Pakistan and also the International scenario. Because of all men or women, who love poetry and qualitative poetry, whether it be Shakespeare, Goethe or Ghalib, it is the quality of that poetry that people are mesmerised by, that people really take to. It is not the question of parochialism, it is not the question of localism, it is the quality and depth and attraction of the language and poetry that you find attracts you, like in the English language, Shakespeare has a class of his own, all great writers and poets have their little distinction. Today perhaps Latif is more relevant to Sindh because of the time and age that we happen to live in and perhaps when you pass through transformation in a given society, a land of peace and sufism has suddenly become embroiled in a state of violence and turbulence. I think the reason is that the sons and daughters of Sindh have deviated from

the message that the leaders of Sindh had given to it over the last 200 years and many people say that those who do not learn the lessons of history are bound to repeat them and perhaps there will be no better occasion than one today to talk about Latif and analyse what has gone wrong where, and the answer is very simple. The answer is to practically implement what Latif talked about, harmony and peace and Tauhid and the great goodwill that he talked about.

I am thankful to the speakers from all over Pakistan for their participation which gives strength and vigour and vitality to a poet today who is not the poet of Sindh alone but a poet of the world, for such is the quality that Latif was made of. The best way to find Sindh is to find Latif.

The Universal Message of Shah Abdul Latif

Reazul Hossain

Like William Shakespeare who was discovered long after his departure, Shah Abdul Laif Bhitai is still being discovered by the world as a poet, philosopher and musicologist of far greater calibre than previously suspected. Everyday brings into light new information about the multifaceted genius of this saint that any country would be immensely proud of. Still so much remains to be discovered. For instance, Shah's *Kafis* remain mostly beyond the reach of non-Sindhi speakers for lack of good and comprehensive translation. Even the fact that he had been read and appreciated outside Sindh many years ago is news today. For instance, the Bangla Academy of Bangladesh had published in 1970 a book in Bangla entitled "*Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai*" written by A.N.M. Bazlur Rashid; this book gives an excellent account of the life and some of the works of this great poet. Even earlier, at the special request and invitation of Rabindranath Tagore, Professor Gurdial Mallik (the then Professor of English at the Visva Bharati University (Santiniketan), ethnically a Sindhi) delivered a series of Extension Lectures during the second term of the 1932-33 academic year on the Mystics of Sindh in general and Shah Abdul Latif in particular.*

Shah is generally acclaimed as a sufi poet. The popular image of the sufi is a saint who has totally withdrawn himself from this brief interlude of existence on earth and sold himself away in eternal quest of the One, The Incomprehensible. Shah does not fit this popular perception; he belonged to the original class of sufis who, ac-

* "Divine Dwellers in The Desert", Royal Book Company, Karachi. 1989.

According to *Kashf al-Mahjub* (the oldest treatise on sufism), held that every man must perform duties simultaneously towards God, his fellow-men and self as indivisible components of the worship of God. It is very surprising that while Shah's *Risalo* is in Sindhi (when men of learning in his time usually wrote in Arabic or Persian), he has sometimes taken words or phrases in Arabic from the Quran and the Hadith, and grafted these into the Sindhi text of the *Risalo*. Clearly, Shah was not at loss for suitable words in Sindhi (and when he did not find suitable words in Sindhi, he had coined Sindhi words from those languages); rather, it was a deliberate attempt on his part to make the readers look up these words in the Quran or the Hadith. To give an instance, Shah quotes in *Sur Ramkali* the phrase "those who believe and do righteous actions" directly in original Arabic from the Holy Quran. If one turns any few pages of the Quran, one is bound to come across this phrase. Chapter 2 Verse 177 of the Quran explains the comprehensive meaning of the term "righteous actions" which include spending "for your kin, for the orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarers, for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves" as well as practice of regular charity. What is meant by "charity" has been explained lucidly by the Holy Prophet (pbuh) in the following discussion:

He had said : "Charity is a necessity for every Muslim"

One asked : "What if a person has nothing ?"

A. "He should work with his own hands for his benefit and then give something out of such earnings to charity."

Q. "What if he is not able to work?"

A. "He should help the poor and needy."

Q. "What if he cannot do even that?"

A. "He should urge others to do good."

Q. "What if he lacks that also?"

A. "He should check himself from doing evil; that is also charity."

Shah further quotes in *Sur Ramkali* from the Quran (Ch.3 Verse 91): "You cannot attain righteousness unless you spend out of what you love." Likewise, in *Sur Abri* and *Sur Asa*, Shah quotes the sentence from the Quran (Ch.51 Verse 21): "And in your souls, can you not then see?" When we look in Ch.51 of the Quran, we see that the preceeding Verses no. 17-19 promise Heaven for "doers of good" who are then described as those who sleep but little of the

night, who ask forgiveness before dawn, and in whose wealth "the beggar and the outcast had due share"; In *Sur Pirbhati*, Shah has urged his audience to do exactly the same. More over, in this *Sur*, as in many others, Shah has urged his readers to constantly seek Divine mercy; one must remember in this context the Hadith that "God has no mercy for any one who has no mercy for others."

Again in *Sur Sarang* and *Sur Ramkali*, we find Shah quoting from the Quran (Ch.93 Verse 5) the Arabic words "Verily the Lord shall give thee" a reward; the soul of this chapter is the command (in Verses no.9-10): "Treat not the orphan with harshness, nor repulse the petitioner."

When we juxtapose these Islamic teachings in the *Risalo* with the social conditions during Shah's days, his verses acquire the dimension of social reform. In fact, worship of God is the constant theme throughout the *Risalo*. By quoting these Quranic verses and Hadith, Shah has left more than ample clues in the *Risalo* that worship of and belief in God comprise service to humanity. Shah had very good reasons for undertaking social reform. In *Sur Burvo Sindhi*, he had lamented:

"People in general have cooled down in their sincerity. These days a person eats the flesh of another person. My dear friend! Nothing survives in this world except fragrance (of good deeds). The general experience regrettably is that, barring a negligible minority, people are given to hypocrisy."

A number of astute observations of social ills stand out in his *Risalo*; for instance, he expressed joy in *Sur Sarang* that the rain, as a shower of mercy, dashed the hopes of the hoarders to make profits out of the miseries of the people; he added that: "May all those who create shortage and misers who are alien to human sympathy perish." In *Sur Kamod*, he firmly espoused the cause of social egalitarianism by pointing out that not only queen Noori but also king Jam Tamachi benefitted from the marriage which was solemnized without any regard to the disparity in their social status.

Shah did not merely preach the principle of egalitarianism emphasized in Islam, but also practiced it himself scrupulously. He refused to accept privilege, influence, power and wealth that went with the hereditary title of Syed; on the other hand, he led an abstemious and frugal life that even a monk would be proud of. He actively shunned royal patronage even when he was facing persecution for his iconoclasm. To encourage the people to accept the challenges of adversity, he invited his Beloved to inflict ultimate tribulation on

him in *Sur Yaman Kalyan*:

Strike, Friend-Thy hand raise,
Hold not Thy hand. And should I die
By such death, I shall honoured be,
Which through this wound is caused.

Like a revolutionary, the Shah undertook the task of re-invigorating the essence of Islam. As a first step in this direction he swept away with bold strokes all that had accumulated and misled the people in the name of religion. For instance, he called himself "in between Shia and Sunni"; he did not differentiate between Naqshabandi, Qalandari, Suhrawardy and other forms of sufism. He dismissed the monopoly of languages like Arabic and Persian over Islam; for example, he described in *Sur Pirbhati* that God was tremendously pleased with an unsophisticated but enthusiastic seeker who could pray in no other way but in the Lassi dialect. Like Imam Gazzali, he redefined *wahdatul wajud* on the one hand, and the orthodox view (canon law) of Islam on the other. This is how he advised Suhni:

Remember to learn the lesson of Shariat,
Far excels from the Tariqat's way the truth of Haqiqat;
Lo! It is the station of Ma'rifat that
In reality is the reward of the lovers.

In the clash of truth versus untruth, Shah was uncompromising; yet his knowledge of truth was devoid of ego. He spiritually followed the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) advice to go even as far as China for knowledge, as he associated with the Hindu *yogis* and visited their places of pilgrimage including Hinglaj. (It is noteworthy that after disagreement, the *yogis* left Shah while he was asleep; but Shah retained respect for them all his life). This egoless knowledge gave him ability to separate grain from chaff; his *Sur Khahori* and *Sur Ramkali* are excellent examples in this respect. Particularly, *Sur Ramkali* which contains 25 quotations from the Quran and 10 quotations from the Hadith, is remarkably objective, tolerant and frank discussions of Islam and other religions. Shah has praised what he regarded as praiseworthy and rejected the unacceptable with tolerance and without rancour. For instance, he could not reconcile himself with monkery; in *Sur Sasui Abri*, he said:

Sasui, within yourself you bear

The Message of the Master

what you are seeking so;
No one found ever anything
by walking here and there;
As though he your own being were
so seek his whereabouts.

Shah has cast the heroines of the folk tales-Sasui, Suhni, Lilan, Momal and Marui incomparably bigger than the heroes (except in *Sur Kamod* and *Sur Sorath*) and depicted them as symbols of the inordinate capacity of the human soul for total self sacrifice to God's will. In the age when women were either locked at home as little more than chattel or locked out as harlots in the bazaars, Shah had shown a true Islamic attitude of respect towards the so-called weaker sex. Marui stands for an unbroken spirit of an individual or a nation, which refused to be subjected to any kind of bondage. Shah's choice of Suhni was particularly daring, because he had clearly expressed an outcry against the imposition of society's frigid rule (in the form of her forced marriage to Dam) on freedom of the individual. But Shah does not portray Suhni's death as her defeat, rather the opposite as we shall see later.

Any one who has read Shah's life is aware of his sufferings, initial rejection of him by the father of his lady love (later his wife) on grounds of difference in social status, rejection of him by the *Yogis* (lamented 42 times in *Sur Ramkali*), persecution by other Syeds, the nobility and the Kalhora king for his spreading fame as a *ma-shaykh* among common people, and this persecution forced him to change his place of residence a number of times. Personal sufferings aside, Shah was a kind-hearted soul who could not even bear to see animals in pain. He gave a pathetic description in *Sur Khambat* of camels with padded eyes working away in oil mills. It is but natural that the decayed and degenerating society of his time and the people's sufferings due to imperial invasions from abroad deeply troubled him. He advised, cajoled and even admonished the people about the "righteous actions" by about 100 references to and direct quotations from the Holy Quran and the Hadith. In *Sur Asa*, he wrote:

"Faith does not mean mere recitation of the Kalima. Your mind is still polluted by hypocrisy, disbelief and *Satan's* activities.....in your mind, you are still *Azar*" (i.e. idol-worshipper).

These *paighams* of Shah are inspired by the Hadith: one is that,

"None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself"; another saying is that, "He who eats his fill while his neighbour goes without food is not a believer."

He even confronted the Hindus for not living up to their religious standard, as he addressed them with following words in *Sur Asa*:

"You are faithless even to your disbelief! You do not conform to it. Hence you should not call yourself infidel. Simultaneously, you are definitely not a Hindu and as such, you do not deserve to wear the religious thread."

Therefore, the agony within Shah's soul was two-fold: one was spiritual agony borne out of the separation of the lover from the beloved and the former's ceaseless pursuit for reunion. But this agony did not make Shah compose the *Risalo*; on the contrary, he posed these questions in *Sur Yaman Kalyan*:

"Why all this manuscript writing? Why all this wastage of ink? Seek directly your way to Allah The Originator and The Prime Author."

It is Shah's agony for his fellow-men which made him take up the pen and the *yaktaro*, as he admitted in this verse:

What you consider to be *abyat*
Are nothing but *Ayat*,
For they sublimate you
And bring to you nearer to your Dearest.

Out of apprehension that his *paigham* might be misunderstood, he flung his life's work into Lake Kirar. Only his disciples' persuasion that the *Risalo* was needed for guidance of the common people made him agree to the reconstitution of the *Ganje Latif*.

These are all well-known; but arranged in this manner, these lead to better understanding of the perspective and the relevance of the Shah's creative output in the light of his deep concern for the well-being of man both in this life and hereafter. We may recall in this connection the Quranic Verses no.201-202 of Chapter 2, which state:

"And there are men who say: "Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter"..... To these will be allotted what they have earned; And God is quick in account."

The Message of the Master

Shah, who always carried the Quran with him, could not but note this Quranic emphasis on the lives on two sides of death. Moreover, the Quran speaks much more of 'namaz' and 'zakat' together than of other forms of worship. Certainly, the main thrust of the *Risalo* is towards spiritual reawakening; but Shah, like the Quran and the Hadith, gave due emphasis on this earthly life, however brief and illusive it may be. His life and literature are steeped in Quranic teaching: "Verily God commands you to be just and kind". He devoted the entire *Sur Sarang* to a joyous account of the merciful effects of rain on man and nature, and prayed for not only Sindh but the whole world:

Oh God, may ever you on Sindh
bestow abundance rare;
Beloved! all the world let share
Thy Grace, and fruitful be.

But the reader must also mark that *Shah-jo-Risalo* tries to simplify matters and mysteries which are in reality the very soul of complexity. Shah believed that as a consequential effect of the sacred covenant between God and every human soul at the time of creation (vide Ch.7 Verse 172 of the Quran), every human being is born with the innermost compulsion to respond to the metaphysical urge of seeking and worshipping God, as well as with the freedom to choose between good and evil. Jalaluddin Rumi had compared this freedom with that of a love-sick man; a slave may seek emancipation from his master, but a lover does not seek freedom from the beloved---on the other hand, the lover wants to get more entangled in love. This is why the sufis call God the ultimate Beloved, and seek Divine favour by obeying His commands out of free will. The Prophet (pbuh) said that, "A believer in God keeps on praising Him even while his soul is being withdrawn from his body at the moment of death." Therefore, explaining the esoteric concept of covenant between God and man in clear and lucid language of easy comprehension to the most ordinary people as Shah had done inter alia in *Sur Suhni* and *Sur Marui* was an essential prerequisite to the betterment of individuals leading to a better society as a whole.

Shah has conclusively established his genius by succeeding beyond any measure of success in the near-impossible task of explaining the metaphysical mysteries of the Creator and the creation in simple, poignant and pregnant words and with images drawn from the everyday life of persons belonging to the most common profes-

sions (e.g. a weaver, blacksmith, camel-driver, sailor, merchant, fisherman, shark-hunter and others) and with very familiar scenes drawn from nature (the rain, the desert, the valley, the peacock, the swan, the fish and so forth). Shah was a poet of the masses, so he wrote in Sindhi (his mother-tongue). He took well-known folk tales and recast them as powerful vehicles of spiritual messages for mass consumption, enlightenment and even enjoyment. He not only put liquid melody into lilting verses by composing them in *ragas* and *raginis*, but also invented new musical instruments like the *dumburo*. He mixed religion, poetry and music into such a potent intoxicant that the people, like Rai Diyach, offered and still offer their heads to him in adoration. He urged the people in so many ways to look into their souls wherein they would find God, and to make themselves fit receptacles of Divine light and mercy. He quoted in *Sur Abri* the Hadith that "Whoever knew his soul, certainly knew his God." More over, Shah has left a clear and unambiguous message to all men, however lowly they seem to be, that there is potential in a human being to make the impossible possible in the realisation of God's words that "Man is my secret and I am his secret": These words of God are contained in a Hadith which has been repeatedly quoted by Shah in *Sur Asa*, *Sur Pirbhati* and *Sur Sorath*. He adds in *Sur Kalyan* the Hadith which quoted God as saying, "I am thy lord, and thou art My beloved." With the help of these sayings and teachings, Shah was conveying to ordinary folks that they were not in fact 'ordinary', and that each of them was beloved of God Himself - what a status! It is only after conferring such exalted status, Shah urged them to voluntarily annihilate their very beings in the process of worshipping God for a reward and what a reward! Where plethora of expressions would have been insufficient to give even a hint of this reward, Shah succeeded with superb economy of words when he wrote that Suhni in her moment of total sacrifice in death for the sake of love, she heard her beloved's cry this is the supreme reward of the lovers of God; in singing hymn to this all-pervading reward, Shah penned:

"Hundreds of people have been drowned by the ocean;
But lo! the woman has drowned the ocean itself."

All these brilliant gems of Islamic teachings which Shah has strewn all over the *Risalo* (a typical trend of oriental mind) merit reiteration after ordering them neatly for the occidental mind. While acknowledging in *Sur Khahori* and *Sur Ramkali* that the ultimate

goal of the non-Muslim ascetics is to gain the love of God, Shah adheres to Islamic faith that man is already a beloved of God; citing the Islamic concept of primeval covenant between God and man, Shah emphasised the Islamic teaching that man must fulfil his role by practising voluntarily the highest form of spiritualism and material austerity and exploring the heights of his metaphysical status, all the while remaining submerged in this temporal life: the supreme reward of all this exercise for a man is the opportunity to erase this unreality of existence ('artificially' created by God) so that only His Reality will remain. This act of erasing the Unreality of existence is something that only a man can do, it is not God's role in His scheme of creation to remove this unreality. Jalaluddin Rumi referred to man's role in this scheme of creation with these words, "O God, you do not have what I have, mortality, helplessness, humility and nothingness.

What Shah wanted to impart to the common masses, Allama Iqbal did in philosophical language for erudite men. Quoting the Quranic verse (Ch.95., Verse 5) that "That of goodliest fabric We created man, then brought him down to the lowest of the low", Allama Iqbal stated in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought In Islam* the following:

"It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to shape his own destiny as well as that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own ends and purposes. And in this process of progressive change, God becomes a co-worker with him, provided man takes the initiative."

Shah Abdul Latif, Allama Iqbal and other Muslim thinkers are not alone in conceptualizing the metaphysical aspect or higher purpose of man's life. We find the echo of what Shah had elaborated in his *Risalo* in Mahatma Gandhi's words in his Autobiography:

"Daily the conviction is growing upon me that He (God) alone is real and all else is unreal.... The seeker after truth should be so humble himself that even the dust could crush him. Only then, and not till then, will he have a glimpse of truth."

Even a conservative, practical and down-to-earth politician like Sir Winston Churchill felt that we did need an inner guide or spirit to lead us to an honourable destiny. As Shah had placed repeated em-

phasis on conscience as an unfailing guide, so did Churchill in these words of his:

"The only guide to a man is his conscience, the only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is very imprudent to walk through this life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations, but with this shield, however the fate may play, we march always in the ranks of honour."

Western secular values put the greatest emphasis on outward political freedom, but even the "dissidents" in the former East European communist regimes at the height of repression in 1970-80s emphasized that outward freedom is without much value unless such freedom is accompanied by an inward moral freedom. In his June 1979 Harvard lecture, Alexander Solzhenitsyn described the illusory nature of a freedom not based on personal responsibility and the chronic inability of traditional democracies, as a result, to oppose violence and totalitarianism. He also stated that:

"Since his body is doomed to death, man's task on earth evidently must be more spiritual, not merely the search for the best way to obtain material goods and then their carefree consumption; it has to be fulfilment of a permanent earnest duty so that one's life journey may become above all an experience of moral growth."

Vaclav Havel, one of the most prominent dissident intellectuals of 1980s (and subsequently President of Czechoslovakia) wrote in his treatise *The Power of the Powerlessness* (published in early 1980s) the following:

"In a democracy, human beings may enjoy many personal freedoms and securities,..... but in the end they do them no good, for they too are ultimate victims of the same automatism, and are incapable of defending their concerns about their own identity or preventing their superficialization or transcending concerns about their own personal survival to become proud and responsible members of the polis, making a genuine contribution to the creation of its destiny."

In asking himself the rhetorical question what was to be done, Vaclav Havel answered:

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"A new experience of being, a renewed rootedness in the universe, a newly grasped sense of 'higher responsibility', a new-found inner relationship to other people and to the human community-these factors indicate the direction in which we must go."

The purpose of life must therefore be a life purpose. The Gita has advised one to let noble purpose go and sap the mind "till purpose, mind and man are all undone." George Bernard Shaw (an atheist) described life as "a splendid torch which I have got to hold for a moment; and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing on to the future generation." He called this purpose "the true joy in life", and declared that, "My life belongs to the (human) community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can."

But which way are we all heading? Allama Iqbal put it very succinctly, "In the domain of thought, he (i.e. man) is living in open conflict with himself; and in the domain of economic and political life, he is living in open conflict with others." In other words, man is not looking into his soul to find God (or a higher purpose of existence) and trying to shape his destiny and that of the universe along with (as Allama Iqbal said) God as his co-worker; on the contrary, he is running away from himself and becoming more and more an idol-worshipper (as Shah had said in *Sur Asa*), because he now relies more on guns (repression and terrorism are two sides of the same coin), arms (war and insurgency), drug and alcohol (escapism) to find refuge from his difficulties. As a consequence, all kinds of extremism are on the rise all over the world: ethnic strife, violence, crime, religious intolerance, materialistic extravagance as well as increasing disparity between the rich and the poor nations and individuals. Failure to cope with these problems are pushing mankind to moral and/or physical extinction in two ways: firstly, by way of drug/porno/Kalashnikov culture and secondly, by way of environmental degradation and upsetting the delicate balance of biodiversity. These are universal concerns from which nobody in this global village is immune.

When scientific laws started explaining the workings of the universe like a clockwork, Albert Einstein once posed a famous question, "How much choice did God have in constructing the universe?" When quantum mechanics led to the finding that the universe is governed by chance, he made a famous comment that, "God does not

play dice", even though he was awarded the Nobel prize for his contribution to the quantum theory. This shows that some men of science go for faith against scientific reasoning. On the other hand, however, some other men of science incline the other way. Astrophysicist Stephen Hawking is attempting (as he himself put it) to know "the mind of God"; while writing the introduction for Hawking's book *A Brief History of Time*, Carl Sagan says that the verdict of science so far is that in a universe infinite in time and boundary, there is nothing for a Creator to do. God's miracles in the past did not sufficiently impress man to still the doubts of his existence; modern scientific miracles, no less impressive than those described in religious books, have not been able to stifle the hope for His existence. Scientific knowledge has reduced man to a bundle of genes, environs, nerve cells, carbon and water; still man instinctively feels himself to be more than the sum of it all. As Henry Grunwald asserted in *TIME* of 30th March 1992, religion is making a come-back at this fin de siecle. In light of these developments, it is time to take a renewed look at the teachings of Shah, particularly his emphasis on that aspect of Islam which teaches man, in the words of the Prophet (pbuh), that, "Work for this world as if you live in it forever, and work for the other world for you will die tomorrow."

This study has now become imperative because we see a disturbing trend about which British historian Arnold Toynbee had written in 1948 in the book *Civilization on Trial* in these words:

"Thus Islam is once more facing the West with her back to the wall; but this time the odds are more heavily against her than they were even at the most critical moment of the Crusades, for the modern West is superior to her not only in arms but also in the technique of economic life, on which military science ultimately depends, and above all in spiritual culture, the inward force which alone creates and sustains the outward manifestations of what is called civilization."

Arnold Toynbee concluded this chapter of his book with these prophetic words:

"Pan-Islamism is dormant-yet we have to reckon with the possibility that the sleeper may awake if ever the cosmopolitan proletariat of a 'Westernized' world revolts against Western domination and cries out for anti-western leadership. That call might

have incalculable psychological effects in evoking the militant spirit of Islam..... On two historic occasions in the past (i.e.under the first successors of the Prophet (pbuh) and later on under Saladin and the Mamluks), ... Islam has been the sign in which an Oriental society has risen up victoriously against an Occidental intruder If the present situation of mankind were to precipitate a 'race war', Islam might be moved to play her historic role once again."

These historical trends pointed out by Arnold Toynbee have assumed even greater significance with the independence of the Baltic and the Central Asian Republics as well as vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, technology and scientists. End of "cold war" may not therefore mean end of tyranny of nuclear armament over mankind. These are again matters of universal concern.

But there is no philosophically cogent reason why Islam and the West should clash. James A.Bill wrote in the article Resurgent Islam in the Persian Gulf published in the Foreign Affairs (Spring 1984) the following:

"Estrangement between the United States and Islam occurs against a backdrop of many centuries of tension between the Muslim world and the West. There is nothing inherently anti-American about Islam. It is the policies of governments that have converted Muslims into critics and opponents..... Islam has much more in common with the West than it has with communist ideologies of the East."

Islam (derived from the word *salam* or peace) shares with other religions a central commitment to peace- *shalom* is the Hebrew word for peace central to Judaism and Christianity, and so is the meaning of the word *shanti* to Hinduism and Buddhism, As Shah Abdul Latif, Allama Iqbal and others point out, Islam stands apart from other religions in bestowing upon man a status as a co-worker of God in the scheme of creation as explained before; religions other than Islam have either ascribed partners to God (plurality of God is simply untrue) or made man a passive subject in the scheme of creation. Therefore, Islam stands for peace with creativity: practice of peace with creativity catapults man to the heights of accomplishment and similarly, practice of peace sans creativity weighs man down to a low status.

That the Muslims under the Prophet (pbuh) rose equal to the

tasks of creative peace has been graphically described by Count Leon Ostrorog in his speeches on Angora Reform in the University of London in 1927:

"Those Eastern thinkers of the IXth century laid down, on the basis of their theology, the principles of the Rights of Man in those very terms, comprehending the rights of individual liberty, and of inviolability of person and property; described the supreme power in Islam, or Caliphate, as based on a contract, implying conditions of capacity and performance, and subject to cancellation if the conditions of the contract were not fulfilled; elaborated a Law of War of which the humane, chivalrous prescriptions would have put to the blush certain belligerents in the Great War (i.e. World War I); expounded a doctrine of tolerance of Non-Muslim creeds so liberal that our West had to wait a thousand years before seeing equivalent principles adopted."

Count Ostrorog had pinpointed the most fundamental reason for the decline of the Umma to this factor: "The great man (i.e. a Muslim thinker) became, not the man who thought and created, but the man who read and remembered." Islam unlocks the highest creativity from the human soul, but we Muslims today seem to have forgotten that the very first word of the Quran revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) was "Read" or "Learn". If we have a musical instrument and cannot play it, the fault is with us and not with the instrument. Shah Abdul Latif was one of the greatest teachers who could give lessons to the most ordinary human beings how to play and listen to that musical instrument of supreme quality-Islam.

Shah's life was one of unending learning and vigorous creativity totally in keeping with the very first sentence revealed of the Quran: "Read (learn) in the name of thy Lord who created." He had left the comfort of home to gather knowledge; in his *Risalo*, he urged his audience to immolate their refectory *nafs* like the moth, and encouraged the characters in his Surs to go on in pursuit of their cherished objectives-Sassui to continue to search, Suhni to jump into the river, Leela to continue to ask forgiveness, the weaver to spin (and to spin with love at heart), and the unmindful to forsake sleep for the sake of prayer. In *Sur Bilawal*, he advised that, "There is no particular advantage in indulging in minor skirmishes; do not forget the major battle." This recalls to mind the Prophet's (pbuh) famous Hadith in which, while returning home from a battle against the non-believers, he had stated that, "We are going from lesser jihad to grat-

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er jihad". (The concept of jihad primarily relates to the effort of the soul to avert evil). For this cause with the objective of serving God, humanity and self as indivisible components of the worship of God, no effort was too strenuous, no price was too costly and no sacrifice was too great for Shah. Beyond a shred of doubt, Shah Abdul Latif was a poet of action, of hope, of love, of fellow-feeling, of tolerance, of moderation, of social and moral peace without violence and distinction.

Here lies the true significance, timelessness and universality of Shah's *Risalo*. What he had lamented in *Sur Burvo Sindhi* and *Sur Asa* in respect of both Muslims and non-Muslims has become more relevant with the flow of water in the Indus. We, the peoples of the world, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, must take from Shah lessons in harmony and tolerance, and must remember at all times that we have indeed been guaranteed freedom under primeval and sacred covenant, but it is demanded of us that we truly worship God by serving Him, humanity and self. Only then, will troubled and tormented mankind find a way out of the present turmoil and a way leading to real and enduring peace in combination with both justice and mercy on one hand on earth and in life on the other side in physical death-these were the real objectives of Shah Abdul Latif's literary and other creative activities. As for himself, Shah had written:

Let me search and search, and not find;
Good that I did not meet the Beloved,
Lest the longing in my heart
Be quenched by such a union.

Shah Latif And The East India Company

S. Q. Fatimi

The times were in disharmony when Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was born to set things right. Aurangzeb's pyrrhic victories had shattered the long- and well established social and fiscal fabric of the subcontinent. In Sindh the *coup de grace* was provided courtesy by the rapacious Nadir Shah Afshar who annexed Sindh to his ill-gotten Persian empire. When he was killed by his own troops, Ahmad Khan Sadozai, a member of his bodyguard, appropriated it to his newly-founded State. Thus, Sindh had become a chattel changing hands among alien parvenus. The local elite consisted of the pirs and mirs who had entered into an unholy alliance against the peasants, herdsmen, fishermen, traders, and labourers of the land. This local elite found in the popular appeal of Shah's poetry a challenge to their own authority. The ruling Kalhor, who claimed both the temporal and spiritual overlordship, made a number of sneaking attempts at the assassination of the Sayyid. Other Holy houses of Sindh including his own Mut'allawis were not far behind in conspiring against the poet of Bhit'.

But how did he react to all this? There is no overt or covert reference to the above-mentioned earth-shaking political vicissitudes of the times in his *Risalo*. None whatsoever to the attempts on his life; none to the diabolic conspiracies against him by the divines and the holy men of Sindh. Was he so insensitive? Could anyone let alone a poet and that too of his calibre remain apathetic to those events? Sorley seems to suggest that like Kant and Hegel the Shah lived in his contemplative ivory tower.² But that is palpably wrong. Shah was constantly on the move³ and he moved among the mass-

es, and sang of the masses, and for the masses. And for that matter, even Kant and Hegel were the precursors of the revolutionary thought of Karl Marx.

The great Latifian savant, Hotchand Moolchand Gurbuxani, made an highly erudite attempt to interpret the whole of Shah's *Risalo* in esoteric terms.⁴ But that raises some crucial questions that must be answered: Can esotericism be an alibi for callousness? Is *tasawwuf* an escape from life? A generation before the Shah, the great Sufi whose love and faith blossomed in Sindh, I mean Sarmad (d.1661) of Dara Shikoh fame, gave a resounding No to these questions. He showed how powerful an expression of socio-political commitment the esoteric thought of *Tauhid* can be.⁵ In Shah's own lifetime another Sufi saint, Shah' Inayat of Jhok Sharif (d.1718) offered the supreme sacrifice for that commitment along with his valiant band of his *hari* devotees.⁶ Did Shah fail where Sarmad and Inayat succeeded?

No. He achieved still greater success. They were the *'shaheeds*; he was the *ghazi*. All his life he himself fought and urged his followers to fight against hatred with love. Against self-aggrandisement and lust with benevolence and grace.

Against violence with peace. Against religious fanaticism with the Quranic dictums: لا اكره في الدين (no compulsion in religion. 2. 256) and لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (for you your religion and for me mine. 109.6). Against parochialism with the Sufi message of pluralism, of وحدت در كثرت (unity-in-diversity), and on the positive and all-comprehensive side, for that throbbing and pulsating nationalism that is over arched by universalism: that which is nobly enshrined in the immortal and rightly oft quoted stanza of his *Sur Sarang* (IV.II):

موتی ماندائین جی، واری کبائین وار،
وچون وسن آئیون، چگی پت چوڌار،
کی آئیون استنبول تی، کن میجان مغرب پار،
کی چمکن چین تی، کی لهن سمرقند سار،
کی رمی ریثیون روم تی، کی کابل، کی قندار،
کی دهلی، کی دکن، کی گزن مٹی گرنار،
کن جنہی جیسلمیر تان، دنا بیکانیر بکار،
کنہین پچ پچائیو، کنہین ڍٺ مٹی ڍار،
کنہین اچی عمرکوٹ تان، وسایا وکھار،
سائینرا سدائین، کرین، مٹی سنڌ سکار،

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دوستا منا دلدارا عالم سڀ آباد ڪرين.

It has been beautifully rendered into English by Elsa Kazi:

Warm preparations are again
in progress everywhere;
Again the lightnings have begun
to leap with arduous flare;
Some towards Istanbul do dive,
some to the West repair;
Some over China glitter, some
of Samarkand and take care;
Some wander to Byzantium, Kabul,
some to Kandhar fare;
Some lie on Delhi, Deccan, some
reach Girnar, thundering there
And greens on Bikanir pour those
that jump from Jesalmare
Some Bhuj have soaked, others descend
on Dhat with gentle air.
Those crossing Umerkote have made
the fields fertile and fair.
O God, may ever you on Sindh
bestow abundance rare;
Beloved ! all the world let share
Thy grace, and fruitful be.'

Parenthetically, if the above stanza is traced on a map, it would show Shah's remarkable grasp of the geography of his milieu: from Constantinople and further West to China in the Far East the prism of his camera gets closer and still closer till it is finally focussed on Sindh.

But there is one exception to what has been stated above. In a stanza of *Sur Sriraag* (III.11), there is an expression of the most bitter hatred which appears to fundamentally contradict his message of peace, love and tranquillity.

دنڪي وڃ درياھ، ڪي ٻڏي ڪي اُٻڙي،
هو جي واڏي واٽيا، سي سونهڻ سڀ سڙيا،
معلم ماڳ نه اڳين، قلنڪي منجهه ڦريا،
ملاح تنهنجيءَ مڪڙي، اچي چور چڙهيا،
جتي ڍنگ ڍريا، تي تاري تنهنجي.

Professor Akram Ansari has rendered it into English verse:

My bark in mid-stream may sink, may sail,
What was thought so perfect now doth fail.
The guides are not to be seen in rightful place.
The prowling pirates up and down do pace,
May Lord my modest craft protect!
When proud vessels have been cruelly wrecked.⁸

The word *farangifirangi* (Frank) epitomises all the bitterness that the easterners felt towards their western colonisers. The Sindhi phonology has retained the Vedic preference for the *r* sound to that of *l*, for example, the word *thal* of modern Indo-Aryan languages is in Sindhi *tharu*; *pipal*, *jal*, *jaru*, *bal*, *varu*, etc. But the Shah has put more venom in the term *firangi* by turning *r* sound into *l*; and, of course, *f* into *ph* thus, *farangifirangi* became *philangi*. I doubt if Professor Ansari's 'pirate' does justice to Shah's *philangi*. In one *bayt* Shah says: *قلنگي منجه قريا* and in the next: *اچي چور چرھيا*. Now, 'pirate' is much too sophisticated a term for the Sindhi pejorative *چور*. It is what Sorley said of Shah's "imaginative use of the Sindhi language"⁹ that makes his poetry sometimes untranslatable. It can only be paraphrased.

But what was the occasion for this most uncharacteristic outburst of the Shah against the *philangi*? Shah Jahan's short-sightedness had allowed the East India company to establish a factory at Thatta in 1653 A.D. but they had to close it in 1662 A.D., that is twenty-seven years before Shah's birth. The British Company did not relish the tough competition offered by the Dutch; the Moghul law of escheat which brought about a modicum of economic balance was abhorred by them; and, finally, the War of Succession (1659 A.D.) with its resultant insecurity proved the proverbial last straw.¹⁰ Thus, there was apparently no *philangi* on the sacred soil of Sindh. There was the thriving local trade of the whole of Northern India passing through the Indus waterway and there was what Sorley has pithily termed 'the coastal trade' along the Kachh-Sind-Makran coast.¹¹ There was very brisk international maritime trade at the neighbouring Cambay, the Khambayat of the local toponymy which has been depicted in great and loving detail by the Shah in *Sur Sriraag*.¹² It is most significant that as we pointed out above in that very *Sur Sriraag* come the bitter cry of anguish against the economic inroads of the *philangi*. It unmistakably shows that the above-quoted stanza is related to that maritime trade.

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I am sure that in this stanza of *Sur Sriraag* there was the prophetic warning against the consequences of the most incompetent Moghul ruler Farrukh Siyar's *firman* of 1717A.D. which, among other concessions, made the Company's trade customs free throughout the Imperial territories in return for an annual tribute of the paltry sum of rupees Three Thousand. قومي فروختند وچہ ارزان فروختندا (They sold a nation and how cheaply they sold it!) *The Cambridge Economic History of India* has tersely commented on this *firman* in the following words:

The edict of Emperor Farrukhsiyar was to become the cornerstone of English commercial and political policy in India, and by making the Company partly independent of the local redistributive enterprise, it opened the way to possible corruption and abuse of the system. The indigenous merchants, subject to the payment of numerous tolls and customs dues, were placed in a position of disadvantage and strove to overcome it by purchasing duty-free trading passes from the English company.¹³

The eventual domination of the East India Company over the international maritime trade of the South Asian subcontinent inevitably led to the military strength and the political sovereignty of the *philangi*.

About the same time Farrukh Siyar's *subedar* at Thatta led a punitive expedition against Shah 'Inayat whom we mentioned earlier. The Sufi had led the resistance of the long-suffering peasants of Sindh. For four months the *fiqirs*, *yogis* and *haris* of Jhok, near Hyderabad, suffered the strangulating siege of the Moghul imperial forces. In January 1718 A.D., they were finally put to sword.¹⁴

The two most prominent literateurs of modern Sindh, Maulana Din Muhammad Wafai and Pir Husamuddin Rashdi, have suggested that in the following two stanzas of *Sur Ramkali* (VIII.8 and 10), the Shah has lamented over this terrible tragedy:¹⁵

اچ نہ اوطاقن یر، طالب توارین،
آدیس ائی ویا، مڑھئون مون مارین،
هو جي جيء کي جيارين، سي لاهوتي لڏي ويا.
اچ نہ اوطاقن یر، سندي جو ڳين ذات،
ساري سناسين کي، رنر ساري رات،
مون تن جنين جي تات، سي لاهوتي لڏي ويا.

Elsa Kazi has rendered the above into English in her inimitable style:

God-secker's voice today I miss,
the courtyard now is desolate;
The sight of empty places here,
kills me, so tortuous it is
Who to the soul gave life and bliss,
the selfless ones, departed are!

Today the yogis disappeared,
remembering them, I wept whole night;
Those whom I searched and so revered,
are vanished never to return.¹⁶

Mark the restrained pathos of the above elegiac stanzas.

Coming back to the ill-fated edict of the Moghul monarch we find that the Shah was a mature young man of twenty eight years when it was issued. There were more mature and vastly more learned divines and visionaries in India-Pakistan of those times but the Shah was unique and solitary in his warning against the machinations of the *philangi*. It fell on deaf ears. Four decades after that fatal *firman* the Moghul forces were defeated by the red-coats of the much favoured East India Company on the battle-field of Plassey and a year after that, that is, in 1758 A.D., began the second and the more imperious period of the English Company's having a foothold on the ancient soil of Sindh. But then the Shah was no longer in this world; six years earlier he had left for the eternal abode for his tryst with the Beloved.

Abbreviations

Agha= Muhammad Yakoob Agha, (rev., annot., and trans.), *Shah jo Risalo alias Ganje Latif*, 3 vols., BCCC, 1985

Akhund= Abdul Hamid Akhund (ed.), *Shah Abdul Latif, his Mystical Poetry*, BCCC, 1991

BCCC= Shah Abdul Latif Bhitshah Cultural Centre Committee, Hyderabad (Sindh).

Sorley= H.T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit: his Poetry, Life and Times*, Oxford University Press, 1940, Reprint, Karachi, 1966.

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References:

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2. Sorley, p.171.
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Shah Latif And Yunus Emre

Muhammad Khalid Masud

In history when political upheavals and wars ravaged a country and the people suffered like fields scorched by the hot summer sun, Sufi poetry often descended on them like the soothing rain. Folk Sufi poets came like wandering clouds in deserts, hills and plains chanting songs of love, selfless sacrifice, and unity of all races and religions. They reunited hearts and mended the torn fabric of society. The unity and continuity of Muslim existence have been nurtured largely by these rainy clouds. This paper proposes to pay tribute to two of these generous clouds: Shah Latif and Yunus Emre.

Shah Latif in eighteenth century Sindh and Yunus Emre in 13th century Anatolia, though separate in time and space, resemble with each other in countless ways. Both flourished in periods of political chaos. If Sindh was raided by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah; Anatolia was ransacked by Mongol and Saljuq invasions. Shah and Emre both belonged to a popular folk tradition that refused to partake of formal education. Both were called therefore Ummi yet their scholarship was universally admitted. Both loved music and singing. Both broke away from the dominant Persian literary tradition to employ local language for their songs. Both enriched their mother tongues so much as to fashion them into outstanding literary languages. Both were critical of the literalist, formal and divisive interpretation of religious texts. Both preached unity of God or rather unity of existence.

Like Shah Latif, Yunus Emre adored God's creation, observed it keenly and immortalized men, women, animals, birds, brooks, hills

and even the wailing sounds of the water wheel by choosing them as subjects for his poems.¹ Even today a man in the street in Sindh and Anatolia regards Shah and Emre as poets after his own heart because they sing about his pains and agonies, in his tongue and tunes.

The amazing affinity between these two great poets invites scholars for a comparative study of their poetry. Annemarie Schimmel has already noted some similarities². A comparative study is no doubt difficult. One must know Turkish and Sindhi languages equally well like Schimmel. But perhaps more than that, any study requires a feeling of empathy with popular folk sufi poetry to appreciate it properly. Current methodological tools in the fields of history and literature are not adequate for the study of a tradition which is oral, lays more emphasis on meanings than on words, on spirit than on form, considers chronological accuracy less important, and does not deprecate the apocryphal³. In short this is a literature of the masses, by the masses, and for the masses, and it can not be adequately appreciated by elitist tools.

Popular folk sufi poetry begins to distinguish itself at the very beginning from the literate tradition. The literate tradition takes *Alif* as the starting point. For folk sufi poetry this is the end of all knowledge.

Shah Latif advises his listener to confine himself to the study of *Alif* and to forget everything else. Because unless one purges one's mind of all other thoughts, one cannot begin to know the meaning of *Alif*⁴. If one proceeds to the other letters of the alphabet without first learning its meaning, he would become a person who reads and reads but meanings do not penetrate into his heart. He turns on pages after pages but never finds the Divine⁵.

Emre enquires from his teacher if he knows the meaning of the letter *Alif*. The teacher regards *Alif* as one of the letters of the alphabet. But the fact is that *Alif* is the sum total of the meaning of the four revealed books⁶. Emre elaborates that if the purpose of bookish learning was to know God, such a goal cannot be attained because it produces vanity in the seeker. If one wishes to seek knowledge of God, one should begin by reading one's own self, not by reading a book.

Popular folk sufi poetry lays stress on humanism. Unlike West European humanism that places man at the center of the universe and tends to dismiss God as a supernatural and metaphysical entity, Sufi humanism sees in man an image of God. European humanism sought dignity of man by abandoning God, folk sufi poetry preached

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human dignity through God.

Shah Latif sees manifestations of God in millions of forms. He believes His essence to be present in every human being⁸. To him man is the embodiment of God's secret⁹. That is why Shah advises the seeker to look within himself. When one comes to know one's identity one finds Allah¹⁰.

Emre disdains knowledge that does not respect man. Man is the noblest creation in the universe. He is a manifestation of God. A scholar who does not regard man as God's image, his scholarship is worthless¹¹.

For Emre, the human heart is the abode of God. He who breaks someone's heart receives punishment in this life as well as in the hereafter. Emre believes in the unity of mankind. Any division of mankind into low or high, faithful or infidel, pious or sinner, is untrue. He questions how the water flowing from one spring could be sweet and sour at the same time.¹² He says that he was proclaimed sinful because he believed that all nations worshipped God.¹³ He declared that no religion was inimical to Islam. True love would reign only when all religions are united¹⁴. He did not care if one was wise and learned, a symbol of piety and a spiritual guide. The enlightened consider him a dunce, ignorant and insubordinate if he does not believe in the oneness of mankind¹⁵. To Emre, monks, hermits and sufis all sought the same goal.

Shah Latif wandered in the company of yogis because he admired their devotion to God. They were not concerned with religion or irreligion, they only preached Divine love.¹⁶

Divine love and union with God are the recurring themes in Shah Latif and Emre. Shah Latif's Sasui finds thousands of thorns piercing her bare feet, causing her endless woes¹⁷. Her gown is torn and her head is bare¹⁸. Shah's Marui accepts scores of patches in her bodice and rags are decking her head¹⁹. His Suhni is exhausted and weak. Her jar is broken and her limbs are lifeless²⁰. The love of the beloved is tormenting them all, yet it is the love and the desire for union that is pulling them constantly to the beloved.

Yunus Emre also repines against the separation from the Beloved. He invites the attention of the Beloved to his feet that are burning like coals, in the deserts and on the streets, his clothes are torn. He implores the Beloved to look at how His love has destroyed him²¹.

Emre's affinity with the beloved emboldens him sometimes to raise his voice:

At times I am with Jesus in heaven
At times I am with Moses on Sina
Raising my rod again on Sina
My God! I call upon you.²²
Again he says:
Since beginning till eternity
I am Mansur
That is why I still exist
Burn me again and again, and blow my ashes in the wind²³.

It is again due to his sense of closeness to God and his love that he dares to argue with God on the day of judgement. He questions the need of reckoning. If he had committed sins it was his own soul that he had wounded. He had done no harm to Him. He complains that men build bridges so that God's creation may cross rivers. Why did God construct bridges finer than hair for them? Were the bridge and balance created only to throw men into the hell. That did not behove of the Almighty God²⁴.

Shah Latif's love asks no questions. On the contrary he beseeches his Beloved to slash him with a knife and kill him. He cannot stand separation. His love for the divine is self-effacing. Complaining and questioning implies separate entities and duality. To Shah, even thinking in terms of duality was a sin²⁵. Shah advises the seeker to neutralize his self. According to him, man does not constitute a separate entity, as Allah also does not exist detached from man²⁶. Developing this theme further, Shah Latif says that those who thought that they were free from *shirk* were still committing it because they were speaking of their separate existence besides God²⁷.

Shah explains it with reference to Azazil, who was an exemplary lover of God. In his true love, he could not bear to turn to others. But in the wake of his extreme love and yearning for Allah, the fellow became argumentative and arrogant. He who was eminent in obedience thus became accursed.²⁸

Like Emre, Shah also finds the path of love full of thorns, his means of travel- boat, camel and feet- unhelpful. His boat is weak and full of holes, his camel is obstinate and disobedient, his swollen feet are bleeding. Yet he must go on travelling. Shah takes strength from feminine devotion whose patience and forbearance finally wins the love of her beloved. Travellers on the path of love in his poems are often female characters.

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The folk sufi tradition believed that institutionalized religion separated man from man, and man from God. It formalized what should be intimate and externalized what should be interiorized. Stress on form and ritual destroyed the spirit and divided religion into sects. Even sufism that rose as a protest against the ritualization of religion was sometimes subjected to formalism. Shah and Emre both protested against these developments.

Shah advised the true sufi to throw his cap into the fire instead of boasting with it. Emre made it clear that *dervishhood* was in the head and not in the head dress²⁹.

Popular folk sufi poetry thus promoted a humanism that freed man from the tyranny of human bondage and invited all mankind to the common meeting point: Love and Unity. Man reached this point in Islam.

Shah Latif and Emre describe Islam as music and rain. Emre's popular hymns still sung by school children in Turkey call upon every man to listen to the songs of the divine love sung by the melodious birds of Islam in the gardens of Mankind³⁰.

Shah Latif's allegorical poem that describes Islam as rain and lightening travelling from Arabia to Turkey, Central Asia, to North and South India and to Sindh, ends with an invitation to pray for the prosperity of Sindh and the entire world³¹.

To conclude, this brief comparative study of Shah Latif and Yunus Emre reveals the significance of the subject and the need for a more comprehensive study by competent scholars. It reveals that popular folk sufi poetry transcends the boundaries of space and time, of languages and religions like clouds of rain that pour peace and love on everyone everywhere indiscriminately.

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Quest For The Beloved

Amar Jaleel

Poetic pursuits and the spiritual evolution of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai are spread over more than forty years. However, it is generally believed by ardent devotees that Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was a born poet. One may not necessarily agree with the assertion. Shah Latif, as he is commonly referred to in Sindh, was the grand son of Shah Karim, the most revered poet of his times. He may have had been influenced by the verses of his great grand-father when very young, but, there is hardly any authentic evidence on record to strengthen the claim that Shah Latif was a born poet. Except for a solitary anecdote when he had refused to learn any thing further after immersing in the meaning of *Alif*, first letter in the Sindhi alphabet, there is nothing to suggest that Shah Latif was a born poet. Such stories are lavishly associated with almost all the mystic saints of the sub-continent.

Shah Latif in fact was a born Sufi, Mystic and Thinker with very strong ascetic inclinations. Almost all his biographers have narrated his long hours, days and nights spent in meditation. Wandering in wilderness and wood was his incessant routine. While prowling in search of Eternal Truth, he used to sit down in the lap of sand dunes, or the hollow trunks of old trees, and there, he developed his spiritual ascendancy by immersing his consciousness in deep meditation.

For the first twenty years of his restless life, Shah Latif ceaselessly sought Eternal Truth. He meditated. He sank into solitude. He wandered in the wilderness. At times he joined the company of

roaming minstrels, and Yogis and Sanyasis on pilgrimage and undertook travels to distant places. He visited the deserts of Rann-Kutch, Jesalmir, Bhuj, Bikanir, Hinglaj, Bela, Lahoot La-makan. He became Jogi, and put on their yellow robes. But he remained thirsty and disillusioned. His wanderings, meditations and ascetic way of life appeared meaningless. His days, months and years spent in search of Eternal Truth did not bear any fruit. He remained parched, and his soul arid.

His yearning and longing for Eternal Truth transformed into a quest for the Beloved. The anguish and agony, trials and tribulations of Sasui are in fact a reflection of the great poet's early years spent in the deserts, mountains, and woods. Through Sasui he has talked to rugged mountains, and deadly deserts. Time and again, repeatedly he asserts:

"Oh mountains and the deserts, treading in thy unkind paths I have been bruised and wounded deep into my soul but no agony, no pain can deter or detract me from the path I have chosen to tread that ultimately leads to the abode of my Beloved Punhu."

Out of deep distress she curses the mountain:

O mountain, you brought me grief
I shall tell my Friend when we meet,
There was terror at morning time
In your twists and turns deceit,
No boon did you work for me
Losing tracks of my loved one's feet.

As a matter of fact Shah Latif through his legendary heroine Sasui has skillfully narrated the tortures and the turmoil, anguish and agony he had experienced while wandering in the woods and wilderness, or treading through the difficult terrains in the rugged mountains, and vast deserts without an oasis.

Punhu signifies the Loved One, the Beloved, and, Sasui manifests the longing of the poet for his Beloved. It is the story of a *Talib*, Seeker of Eternal Truth.

The spiritual development of Shah Latif passed through three stages. At every stage, the ways of the Sufis were unfolded for the poet. Each stage is a revelation and logically it leads to next stage of exalted state of feelings and mystic trance. It is a systematic and gradual shift from one stage of ecstasy to other. The three stages of ecstasy experienced by the great poet are:

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1. Quest for Beloved: The *Salik* or the *Talib*, the seeker embarks upon the difficult path in search for his *Mehboob*, Beloved. The Beloved is the manifestation of Eternal Truth. Like *Sasui*, the *Sanyasis* and *Jogis* he takes to thirsty deserts and rough and rugged mountains. He treads the dreaded path without fear or fright. He wanders in wilderness. Meditates. Thinks. Concentrates. Thus, each and every moment of his life remains preoccupied with his desire to meet his Beloved - the Truth, the Everlasting Beauty. No amount of suffering, hardship and affliction distracts or diverts him from the arduous path consciously chosen by him. There comes a time when like *Suhni* he plunges into the roaring Indus, *Mehran*, to cross over and to meet the Beloved *Mehar* on other bank of the river. And what a dreadful river it is!

There is terror and the tumult rage in the water; powerful crocodiles in thousands are waiting to devour the poor prey; and the *Mehran* is so deep that in the words of *Shah Latif*: Ships in the abyss were engulfed whole.

But the *Salik*, the *Talib*, the seeker of the Eternal Truth, the Everlasting Beauty is not deterred. He in his quest for his Beloved undergoes perpetual suffering without complaining. On the contrary constant suffering makes him more determined to keep treading the path of *Saliks* and *Talibs*.

Shah Latif spent more than the first 20 years of his life like a *Talib*, *Salik*, *Jogi*, the seeker of Eternal Truth. He has wonderfully narrated his experience in agony and pain, in his *Sur Sasui*, *Sur Suhni*, *Sur Khahori*, *Sur Ramkali* and *Sur Ripp*. The extent of travelling through mysterious terrains took *Shah Latif* to the abodes of unknown dwellers. In the guise of a *Jogi*, the seeker of everlasting Beauty, he says: In the quest for my Beloved, I travelled deep into a mysterious domain with astonishing contours which left many a guide baffled.

During this period of *Talash*, search, quest, longing, constant wandering, and perpetual suffering, the great poet was sometimes left bewildered. Where is Eternal Truth? Where is Everlasting Beauty? Where is my Beloved? Where could I find thee! When bruised beyond description, and wounded, and puzzled and perplexed that revelation from Beyond had been poured into his soul. It was divulged unto him, thus: Oh, seeker of Everlasting Truth, you are unnecessarily looking here and there for your Beloved, for your Beloved dwells in your heart: Clean thy soaked and stained mirror, and you will behold the image of the One you are looking for!

2. The Second phase in the spiritual and mystic development of the great poet sprouted when one day, all of a sudden he found himself in front of Sayyadah Begum, the daughter of Mirza Moghul Beg a powerful and influential man of his times. Shah Latif fell in love with the girl. After a prolonged scuffle, and strained relations between the two families, Syed and Begs, marriage was solemnised. Sayyeda Begum became wife of Shah Latif.

The marriage turned out to be the greatest catastrophe for Shah Latif in his celestial pursuits, and mysticism. He realised that possession of the Loved One gradually decreases and diminishes the love for the Beloved. The surging sea of emotions dies down. Longing, craving, and yearning for the Beloved fades away, and finally disappears. Suddenly life becomes meaningless. It comes to a dead end. The state of being disillussined has been vividly portrayed by the great poet in his Sur Lilan-Chancesar, and Sur Momal-Rano. The mystic philosophy of the two Surs is, that the love for the Beloved blossoms not in the Union with the Loved One, but in separation.

3. In order to resolve the mystic diversities experienced by the great poet in his first and second stages of spiritual development, he enters the third, and final stage in the life of a Sufi, the mystic. In the first stage it was revealed upon the great poet that the Beloved lives and dwells in the heart of the *Talib*, the seeker. You can not gain and profit anything if you keep on travelling in the woods and wilderness, and deserts and for the entire life in search for the Beloved, without exploring the self within you. You will have to look for your Beloved within you. But, to discover the presence of the Beloved inwardly, in the heart, is conditional. You will have to first clear the soiled and stained mirror of your mind, and then you will be able to behold the countenance of your Beloved. In the first stage of his spiritual development the philosophy of *Wahdatul-Wajood*, Oneness of Being Or Union with one was revealed upon Shah Latif.

Beloved! hold the 'I' near 'Thee'
All self-concern I have cast from me,
Protector mine! with 'duality'
I wasted for too many days.

The Echo and the Call are same,
If you sound's secret knew-
They both were 'one' but 'two' became,
Only when 'hearing' came.

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In the final stage of his mystic and spiritual development Shah Latif discovered the secret of everlasting Love for the Beloved. The flower of everlasting Love blossoms not in the Union, but in the burning deserts of longing. *Talib* voluntarily submits himself to under the blazing sun of trial and tribulations. By constant burning in the furnace, a *Talib*, a *Salik*, a lover manages to emerge as *Paras*, the philosopher's stone. On touch it turns a piece of rusty iron into glittering gold. At the height of his celestial ecstasy Shah Latif has thus prayed in one of his verses: I keep seeking and searching for my Beloved, but never to attain; for I fear the union with One might bring about calm and tranquility in my restless soul.

At various places in his *Risalo*, Shah Latif has expressed his mystic philosophy in terms of *Wahadatul Wajood*, ultimate union with One. But, in his final assertion he perpetuates the philosophy of satiety being the end of all craving and longing for the Beloved, it is the eternal search for the Beloved which gives meaning to an otherwise meaningless life.

Shah Abdul Latif- A Great Exponent of Sindh, its History And Culture

Dr. Ghulam Ali Allana

Sindh has given birth to various national and international scholars and intellectuals at different times in its history. Their contribution in various fields of knowledge is well documented, but Shah Latif is one of Sindh's renowned poets whose name has been referred to with particular pride.

Shah Latif was not merely a famous sufi and a saint of his time, but justly been considered a celebrated philosopher, poet and artist, an exponent of society, history and culture of Sindh and its adjacent areas. In the view of our renowned scholar and poet, Mr. G. Allana:

Shah Latif in his own right can be regarded among the greatest poets that the world has produced in any language.¹

He was born in a Sufi family, near Bhitshah, was nurtured in the society and culture of Sufis, and finally chose to settle down at Bhitshah. He wandered far and wide alongwith *faqirs*, *jogies* and *san-yasis*. He also visited scholars, intellectuals and heads of villages at different places like Thatta, Sehwan, Kotri Kabir etc.

Describing Sindh, during the days of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1690-1752 AD), Dr. Sorley states:

The Sindh which was the soil from which the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif would spring, was made like the 'Merrie England', which prevailed in the days of the economic self-sufficiency of the villages, the small towns and restricted local enterprise. It

was a society of land holders, petty cultivators, herdsmen, craftsmen and traders, knowing little of the outside world, except what could be seen of it at markets and fairs, in the gathering of strangers at tombs on saints' days or in the company of fellow pilgrims.²

Shah was a poet of the common people. He has described herdsmen, peasants, weavers, fishermen, ironsmiths, seafarers block-printers and camel breeders. All of them were the protagonists of his poetry with whom he passed most of the period of his life. He witnessed their sorrows and griefs, pains and sufferings and also their joys and happiness. These characters depict Sindhi Society, its various aspects, its socio-psychological style, its values and its various other characteristics. They display the social and psychological realities of the Sindhi people. The late G. Allana has explained this idea with different words. He says:

Shah Latif composed his poetry in Sindhi, which was confined to the boundaries of a small part of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. The landscape of Sindh of that time was variegated mounds; rugged mountains; silent and slowly moving rivers and rivulets; forests and fields; the rustic peasant, working hard on his plough; the wandering ascetics in their bizarre clothes, living a life of utter austerity; the simple fishermen, daring the turbulent waters for living; the vast sprawling desert; the cactus tree, sand, gardens and flowers; and here and there, a nobleman, a prince, a king, perchance a highway bandit, the ubiquitous camel and the camel rider; goats and sheep, with the ever present herdsman, the vipers that hissed and kissed and then wriggled their way to a safe place, to breed more snakes. Within such surroundings, Latif sang his songs in a language which the sons of the soil understood and which they had learnt to love with their mother's milk.³

As stated earlier, Shah Latif was a great artist. Whereas an artist uses either his brush, his chisel, his knife or his block to depict or print different figures, motifs or paint a scene, Shah Latif has used the vehicle of his language and selected appropriate words to express his feelings. Thus he has been recognized as a pen-painter of Sindhi culture and society. He was not only a creative poet but he was an artist who could describe scenes from real life on the vast canvas of his poetry. Jean Anne in her book, *History of Art* says:

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The word art is derived from arte and denoted craftsmanship, skill, mastery of form, and association that exhibits between form and ideals and between techniques and material. The term art, therefore, carries with it an obligation not to imitate nature but rather to enrich it. Art serves as a technical and creative record of human needs and achievements.⁴

Shah Latif has described human needs, feelings, joys, pleasures and sorrows. The style with which he describes the life of the common folk of Sindh, and the areas adjacent to Sindh, the way he paints the pictures of the daily life of the people clearly reveals the sublimity of his art. Mr. Hamid Akhund has rightly said:

Very few poets of world literature can stand alongside him when he refers to his people, to their joys and sorrows, his hills, his birds, his villages, his desert and above all his Sohni and Marui (Sindh).⁵

Richard Francis Burton accepts the perceptible excellence of Shah's poetry and writes:

Hence his poetry is the delight of all that can understand it. The learned praise it for its beauty and are fond of hearing it and recite it to the sound of guitar. Even the unlearned generally know selected portions by heart and take the trouble to become acquainted with their meanings.⁶

Considering Shah as an artist and a historian, Shaikh Abdul Rahim says:

He was not only a born poet but also a lyricist, a philosopher and the best chronicler of his times. He would portray every shade of life, with its unending miseries and sorrows mixed with happiness and sweetness.⁷

Shah Latif addresses his people through a unique form of artistic expression. He approaches his readers and listeners through his verses and conveys his message through his words composed in the form of stanzas of *bails* and *vais*. In other words, he expresses his feelings through his *Kalam* (Poetry). He communicates through his verses different scenes in the life of common people- artisans, peasants, fishermen, sea-farers, jats, *rebaries* (couriers) etc. He describes nature, the wanderings of herdsmen, the clouds, the starry sky, the birds flying, the stormy waves of the Arabian sea. I do not agree

with Dr. G.M.Mehkri who says:

The Shah's canvas is, surely, not so wide because he does not seem to have gone beyond Sindh inland.⁸

Latif not only talks about Sindh, but he depicts scenes of Jesalmir, Jodhpur, Junagarh, Bikaner, Girnar, Kutch and Kathiawar. He narrates the history of Rai Khanghar of Kutch. He repeats the episodes of Rai Dyach of Junagarh and Raja Ani Rai. He tells us about Lasbela, Kech Makran and the Khirthar mountains. His *Sur Sarang* and other Surs are witness to the wide canvas painted by him in his *Kalam*. He prays for the prosperity not only of Sindh but for the whole world. He says:

سائينر سدائين ڪرين، مٽي سنڌ سڪار
دوست مٺا دلدار، علم سڀ آباد ڪرين.

The whole world is his canvas.

Shah Latif has painted his models from different angles. Every character represents different qualities and values. In his *Risalo*, he has painted them in such a way that their individualities have been distinguished.

Every Sur of his *Risalo* is permeated with symbols, similies and allegories. He has used local symbols so that he should be able to provide a glimpse of the social, cultural, historical and psychological background of Sindh and its adjacent areas to his readers and listeners, who were acquainted well enough so as to grasp the message Shah Latif wished to convey through the use of such culturally indigenous metaphors. Mr. Abdul Hamid Akhund, in his foreword to his book Shah Abdul Latif writes:

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, is one such phenomena of human emotions who adopted the language of his people and used local symbols to communicate with them.⁹

Shah has communicated his message by using various figures of speech. He uses symbols and allegories to explain and express his ideas and feelings. Abdul Ghafoor Alasty is one of the critics who points out towards many such symbols. For instance Mr. Alasty says:

Shah's *Sur Khambhat* is the celebrated journey of mystics from self to Self, which they have also called flight from self to Self.

That is, a journey from man's egotistic 'I' to man's divine 'thou' in the interior of his personality. Shah has given it the allegorical contours of an actual journey which he took from his home town to a town namely, Khambhat (now in Gujrat, Bharat).¹⁰

Commenting on the poetic excellence of Shah Latif, Agha Muhammad Yakoob says:

The poet has portrayed in *Sur Khambhat*, the clash of interests between the man and his *nafs*, while the man wants to pursue his journey along the straight road leading to his goal. Khambhat was a well known port in the Gulf of Kutch in India. Shah has used this word symbolically to imply the noteworthy internal port whence a person goes to Madina, the resting place of the Holy Prophet¹¹ peace be upon him.

In *Sur Khambhat*, Shah Latif has not only described the scene of the star laden sky but also emphasizes the beauty of the moon and compares it with that of his Beloved. He portrays the scene of beauty by addressing the moon:

O full moon! you rise with lots of embellishment but you can not vie with my beloved even for a moment, howsoever you may try. Whatever excellence you may have in aggregate during your entire life, with all that, you will not be able to compare well with my beloved even for a moment.¹²

Shah Latif describes the moonlit starry night in a manner which can best be enjoyed and appreciated by those who understand the language. He considers both the moon and the crow as his messenger to the beloved. In the view of Mr. G. Allana:

To him, the crow, black, busy with its crowing, is good enough to fly long distances and convey his love messages.¹³

Shah was acutely aware of and acquainted with the qualities, values and characteristics of Sindhi culture and society. Thus he guides and briefs his messenger, the moon, on how to behave with his beloved, and in what manner, he should communicate his message to him:

Oh! Good moon! deliver my message to my beloved. When you are above his abode, whisper the same softly to him, and touch his feet during the course of delivery of my message.¹⁴

In this Sur, Shah Abdul Latif has also described the richness and prosperity of Sindh, as besides Khambhat, other places like Lari Bunder, Jakhi Bundar, Oranga Bundar, Wango Patan, Ali Bundar, Sindhri Bundar and lately Shah Bunder, were very busy centres of trade and commerce in lower Sindh. These were the main river and sea ports from where trade was in progress with the outside world.

Shah Latif expressed all this and communicates his ideas and feelings in the *Risalo* through the symbol, simile and metaphor. He manifests the attributes of God through the stories of men and women, fully utilising both historical background and folk tales from Sindh and its adjacent areas. The heroes and heroines of his *Risalo* are incarnation of beauty and truth. He uses Mehar, Punhu, Jam Tamachi, Chanesar Rau, Rano, Umar Soomro, Maru, Lakho Phulani, Udho Kehar, Abro Sammo, Morriro Mirbahar, Rai Dyach, Beejal, Dodo, Nagar, Sakhi Sapar and Jadam Jakhro as his symbols. Most of them were even unknown to our historians. All of them were brave, generous, kind and represented different qualities. They were very famous in the areas they came from and were very well known to the common folk because of their bravery, valour, benevolence, determination and struggle for life. Shah has described them in his *Risalo* in various surs; for instance in *Sur Dahar*, *Sur Pirbhathi*, *Sur Kalyan*, *Sur Karayal*, *Sur Kamod*, *Sur Bilawal*, *Sur Lilan Chanesar*, *Sur Momal Rano*, *Sur Khahori*, *Sur Sasui Abri*, *Sur Mazoori*, *Sur Hussaini*, *Sur Ripp* and *Sur Ghatu* etc. He describes Suhni, Sasui, Sorath, Noori, Lilan, Kaunro, Momal, Marui, Mehar Rani, Rebaran, Odhin, Hothila Padamni, Sikhara etc. as his heroines. All of them are the characters of historical, pseudo-historical and romantic folk-tales of Sindh, Kutch, Kathiawar and Junagardh etc. All of them have been described as symbols of determination, struggle, valour and endeavour for reaching their goals. Shah has painted emotional expression, feeling, pain and joy of these heroes and heroines in his poetry. He portrays the struggle of Sasui in five Surs. In these Surs he has painted the scenes of Pab hills, Kech Makran, the barren regions of Balochistan; for instance in *Sur Mazoori* he says:

وَدُو کِی رَوَیَاہ اُونچا ڈونگر مَر تَبو
تَمَر نِیٹاہ تہ پیر نہاریان پَرین جو۔

O Trees! do not grow more dense;
O Mountains! do not grow higher;

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O my eyes! do not shed tears;
So that I may be able to see the footprints of the be-
loved.¹⁵

In an other couplet he says:

رُجِنَ بِرَزْزِي، كَرَكُوئلَ جِي كُوكَ
وَكُوكُوءِ وُوكَ، اِي تَانْ اَهْ عَشَقَ جِي.

A shriek was heard all over the wilderness. Was it that of the Cuckoo? It was a cry(which disturbed the entire area). It was possibly a cry filled with expression of love.¹⁶

In the allegory of Momal, Latif depicts the episodes from the life of a beautiful princess, Momal. Momal was exceedingly conscious of her beauty. She baffles with her beauty, the princes of Sindh who are seduced into the corridors of her palace in which she has set up many obstacles and hurdles with magic. Momal, with the help of her sister Somal and her maid-servant Natar, prepares a talismanic apparatus within a magical landscape, consisting of a labyrinthine palace called Kaak, surrounded by a river of red water, and guarded by ferocious and terrifying lions. which groan and roar as the visitor enters. It was proclaimed that whoever would cross the Kaak-Mahal and reach the palace, shall win Momal as his bride.

The appearance of the beautiful palace and its pretty inhabitants soon attracted the notice of rich merchants and noble princes from the region and a large number of them came, one after another, laden with wealth to win her. But whomsoever entered the frightful atmosphere, lost his courage and his life.¹⁷

But Rano was an astute man and had extra-ordinary common sense. With his common sense and wisdom, he was convinced that the apparently ferocious lions, the thick jungles and watery shores were all false. He went through every hurdle with courage and skill and succeeded in reaching the palace where he was greeted by the maid servant, Natar, and was brought before Momal who married him.

Now all this has been portrayed and painted by Shah Latif in his *Risalo* with the help of words. In my view even a good painter may not have been able to describe every scene of Momal's Kaak-Mahal as Shah has done with the help of the language. Latif has not only successfully described the beauty of Momal, and the cunning of Natar, but he has also painted the terrifying impressions of her mag-

ic hurdles, the ferocious scenes of waves of water lashing at the walls of Kaak-Mahal, and the emotions of aspiring lovers who upon losing heart, fell and died on the bank of river Kaak. Shah describing the attraction and beauty of the banks of Kaak river says:

هلو هلو كاڪَ تَرِين، جتي نينهن اچَل
نڪا جَهل نہ پَل، سِڪو پسي پرينءَ کي.

To the banks of river Kaak, let us forward go;
Where restless rush the waters of love, lo;
There, there is no hurdle or obstacle,
There, all behold him, what a spectacle! ¹⁸

In another verse, Shah describes the beauty of Momal and says:

جنهن تڙوڙون ڏون، چوڻا چندن چت ڪيو
اچن پئونر پنيوليا، پاڻيءَ تنهن پئون
پسيو سونهن سيد چئي، نينهن اچن نيش،
راول رتورون، ڪو وڻ لڳو واسينءَ.

At the bathing place where Momal and her friends rub their hair with sandal oil, black bees hover round and then drop in the fragrant water. It seems that the princes (the lovers) have been so intoxicated by the fragrance of Momal that they shed tears of blood upon separation from her. ¹⁹

Shah further describes her beauty and says:

جهڙا گل گلاب جا، تهڙا مٿن ويس،
چوڻا تيل چنبيليا، ها! ها! هو قميش،
پسيو سونهن سيد چئي، نينهن اچن نيش،
لالن جي لبيس، آڻڻ اڪر نہ اجهي.

Beautiful and attractive as her clothes,
As fragrant as the smell of lily,
I swear, in his fragrance daily,
Sayed says, looking at her beauty,
Love itself is black with jealousy,
Seeing the Beloved look with eyes in tense,
Beholding him, I await in silence. ²⁰

In *Sur Marui*, Shah has portrayed symbolically, a human soul that has been wanting to go back to its place of origin. In this *Sur*, Shah has painted the life of the Maru- the herdsmen, the parents of

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Marui, their hamlet, their herds, their goats, the flora and fauna of Thar, the sand hills, the joys and happiness of Maru, after the rainfall on Thar. Shah has portrayed the scene of clouds in different forms, accompanied by flashes of lightning and followed by rainfall and its effects on the people, animals and land.

Similarly in *Sur Kedar* Shah describes the bravery and valour of warriors. He says:

هوڏانهن هُن هاڪاريو، هيڏانهن هي هڻن
سرنايون ۽ سُنڌڙا، پنهنجن پار ٻرن
گهوٽن ۽ گهوڙن، رڻ ۾ لڳون لڏيون.

Oh! yonder side a challenge for a personal combat is hurdle! On this side a sword is flashed and struck. The clarions and bugles are sounded and heard on both sides. The bridegrooms (Young Heroes) and horses seemed wedded in that wilderness.²¹

Shah Latif not only praises the valour of the warrior but he also depicts the courage and bravery of his wife. For instance Shah says:

مَرَمَرين! آئون روئان، موتي آءُ مَر ڪانڌ
ڪچن وڏا پاند، جيئن ٿورا ڏينهن ٿا.

No harm if you die and I bewail your loss! But O! my husband! do not come to me as a fugitive from the battlefield. Infamy has a longer life than that of a human being.²²

Shah Latif refers to the whirlpool of Kalachi and the story of 'Morriro and the Whale' in which he depicts the characteristics of determination and courage expressed by his character, Morriro Mirbahar, the fisherman. Shah portrays Morriro, depicting his determination to avenge the death of his six brothers who were killed and devoured by the monster. Shah depicts the efforts and endeavours of Morriro, who although he was physically an invalid, through determination, courage and perseverance, killed the monster and took revenge for the death of his brothers. Describing the terrifying whirlpools of Kalachi, Shah Latif says:

ڪو جو قهر ڪلاچ ۾، گهڙي سونئي
خبر ڪونه ڏئي، ته رڇ ڪڇاڙي رنديا.

Kalachi vortex seemed so severely unrelenting that who ever entered it was lost. None could disclose whence he was trapped and

caught.²³

Shah further draws the scene of Kalachi whirlpool and says:

آئين جا لڏو لوڏو، اي پرگاهاتوئن جي،
ڪُن ڪلاجيءَ ڪوڏو، سڪ نه ستا ڪڏهن.

Oh! Fisher folk! Your modus operandi (to confront the Kalachi vortex) is based on enthusiasm and it should be the real trait of fish catchers. Such persons who are keen on tempering the crocodile in the vortex do not rest for a moment till they accomplish their mission.²⁴

From these and other examples, one can easily state that Shah Latif had close contact with the sons of the soil-peasants, fishermen, herdsmen, artisans and sea-farers, who were close to his heart and thoughts. He has described their hopes and aspirations, their joys and sorrows and their loves and hates.

The readers and listeners of his poetry and music revel in the graphic depiction of Sindhi society and culture, particularly the ordinary scenes in the daily life of the people, their dwellings and huts, their customs and ceremonies. He also describes the river Indus, the life-line of Sindh, the coastal area, the glassy surface of Kinjhar lake, and the barren ranges of hills. Jogis and Sanyasis traverse Latif's spiritual universe with the realisation that his land and people are deeply rooted in the soil of Sindh.

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12. The translation of the original stanza has been taken from the translation rendered by Agha Mohammad Yakoob from his work Vol.I, P.554.

13 See Ref. No.1 and 3, P.18.

14. Ref. No. 12, Vol. I, P.554.

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Shah Latif : Poet of Love

Ali Ahmad Brohi

I am a lover of Shah Abdul Latif's poetry. My approach toward Shah's poetry is not that of a critic or a scholar but that of a humble admirer. Being a Sindhi, Shah's poetry has come to me with my mother's milk. His thought and expression surrounds the life of an average Sindhi, from birth to death. Every line of Shah provides for Sindhis a sort of aesthetic delight, the like of which one does not experience from any other source. Even the ordinary day to day conversation of a Sindhi contains large elements of Shah's poetry and message. In short all that Latif has expressed in his poetry has become a part of our lives.

Latif is essentially a poet of love and longing. His teaching is that this life is an opportunity given to man to purify himself. The Prophet was also sent down to purify men, to teach them their destiny and wisdom. Latif is constantly reminding us that our ultimate destination is the remembrance of our Creator i.e., prayer. Prayer not only prevents us from trafficking into immoral and evil courses of conduct, but also strengthens our moral fibre and helps us to reach a higher level of life. The main strand of Latif's poetry is a reflection on man's longing to rise above his level of life in order to meet his Maker.

Much of Latif's poetry is allegorical. He takes up ordinary stories that were current in his day- stories about the love affairs of peasants and rustics like Suhni-Mehar, Sasui-Punhu, Umar-Marui or Moriro. Latif uses the characters in these folk stories as mere symbols and expresses through them allegorically the mystical aspects

of the spiritual life of man.

گولیانِ گولیانِ مرلہاں، شالِ مرملانِ هوت

His main theme throughout his poetry is to search, seek and strive for a higher level of life. A mother-shell in the sea, though thirsty does not avail of sea water from below, but is constantly striving to receive a drop of rain water from above, so as to give birth to a pearl. Such is Latif's quest for knowledge.

And if you keep on trying, one day, he who knows Allah, will lead you to His path and to His light. This categorical statement can be made because through His grace we recall the last verse of Quranic Sura Ankabut (The spider).

And those who strive in our (Cause)
We will certainly guide them to our Paths.
For verily Allah is with those who do right.

If we wish to know what the truth is, we will need to make an effort. We have to seek venues, strive and struggle constantly. No new lands can be discovered by staying at home and reading library books or fairy tales. The world has been enlarged by adventures and a wilderness subdued by brave and courageous men. So it is in the world of ideas.

That is precisely what Shah Bhitai says, strive, whether it is day or night. Bitter rain or burning sun notwithstanding. Because otherwise the Sun may set and darkness may overwhelm, and you will fail to trace and trail the footprints of your beloved whom you intend to follow.

Shah is constantly reminding us, that this entire life is a struggle. From birth to death one has to move onwards. There is no provision for rest and relaxation. Once you lie down and sleep, you are doomed. One thing is certain about life, nothing is static. All is changing, evolving, moving forward from one scene to another. Man is lazy and a laggard by nature, because he is a creature of choice, he wants comfort more than truth. He desires security more than adventure. He opts out for rest and recreation. He also likes to shift responsibility upon the shoulders of others. Being aware of man's tendency to rest in comfort, Shah exhorts us to wakeup and do away with drowsiness. If you desire to reach your destination, then you have to get up and rush towards it.

Shah is against laziness and sleep. No poet has condemned sleep as much as Shah. Like Ouspensky, Shah is of the confirmed

view, that man is constantly involved with objective sleep. The whole day he is performing his normal routine duties automatically, like a robot without being acutely conscious of it, until a serious jolt or a shock awakens him to reality. Time and again, Shah has been alerting the seeker for truth, to lie awake, and be on guard, against fast-approaching sleep. He declares that the world is spinning fast. So is time. Every moment of our life is flowing and flying fast. If you are not on the run, you are likely to be left behind, with no one to accompany or guide you.

Nature's demand is that man should rise from 'nothingness to somethingness'. While going towards the *Mairaj* one has to ensure that he is going fast enough towards his real goal. One is wasting time in eating, drinking and making merry year after year. Life being short, one has to worry about time. Every minute counts, since there is so much to do. As per our own promise which we repeat in our 'viter' prayers every night in *Dua-e-Qanoot*, We are hurrying to you, striving and leaping to get near you.

There is no other option but to strive. There are two ways: One is that of goodness and the other of evil. Take your choice. Walk on whichever one you please. Your choice is brief but eternal. If you go backwards, you will have a long way to cover. Latif describes it beautifully:

رات سہائی، پونہ سنیں، پتہ ن وڈو پند،
ہلندی جیبین ڈی، گرہا موڑ مر کنت،
ہندن سوئی ہند، جو پہچائی پرین، کی.

A moonlit night, an open plain,
And so far yet to go;
My camel look not back, for you
It is shame to waver so;
Be ready, resolute, and show
My loved-ones you can reach.

He wants you to walk and not to falter. It is a long walk. But you must continue. Standing still will not help. Either walk or you will be kicked back. There is no way to stand immutably.

The man who performs his allotted duty in life, whose soul thirsts for service, who is devoid of all motive including the subtler shades of selfishness, is the practical mystic. He wants nothing, asks for nothing, desires nothing, and considers pleasure and pain, success and failure as exactly alike. So, he stands up and fights the

battle of life. He is always ready to help his fellow men, even upto his death. The fulfillment of a duty to his fellow beings and to his country are amongst the forms which this variety of mystical realization may take. This path of service and action in purity of motive ultimately leads to the highest truth.

This type of mystical realization, which leads to experiencing and living the divine life of a perfect sage, a swan amongst men, as per Shah Bhitai's perception, is clearly depicted in the *Sur Ramkali* wherein he sings:

بُڪَ وَڌائون بگرين جوڳي ڪندا جُڳ،
 طلب نه رکن طعام جي، اوتيو پيئن آڃ،
 لاهوتين لطيف چوي من ماري ڪيو مڃ،
 سامي جهاڳي سج، اچي وسن ڪي ويجهي ٿيا.

These are the marks of mystics or illuminated sages:

They packed hunger in begging bowls, since the ascetics had to feed common folk. They have no desire or hunger for food and they drink thirst voraciously while enjoying it.

These *Lahooties*, says Latif, have abandoned desires by shaking and hammering their mind very much like moulding date palms into ropes after thrashing the leaves mercilessly.

That is how these ascetic have attained their destination after wading through the ocean of barren wilderness.

Having forsaken the life of pleasure and comfort, these seekers of truth, sages and true recluses, resist the temptations of food, drink and easy life and came outside the orbit and stress of bodily passions and desires.

They were not dejected with sorrows and hardships. They leave behind them the state of fear, anger, and all ties of flesh. They overcome all the deep seated powers of intellect, emotion and will, through the dynamic integration of personality. The soul of man in its sojourn on earth, is reminded of the ideas of beauty and goodness.

Beauty stands on the threshold of the mystical world, and rekindles the love of the soul for its heavenly prototype. All men possess the faculty of perceiving these platonic ideas, if they could but transcend their personality.

The majority of mankind puts pleasure first and so choose the life of enjoyment. But this is a slavish, animal point of view. M

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of finer kind put honour first and choose a life of action particularly in public affairs.

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift:

We have hard work to do and lead to lift.

Shun not the struggle! Face! 'Tis God's gist.

Man in reality is nothing but a speck of dust. In vain does he assume the air of greatness. His life and being, his thinking and activity, his existence and well-being are all dependent upon the forces of nature. It is claimed on his behalf that Man is an immortal being. But this is not true. Man is not immortal by right, though he can achieve immortality by transcending his lower self. Most men live to eat, drink and propagate their species. Human life at this level is hardly distinguishable from that of animals. It is only a few rare individuals who rise above the life of the flesh, who devote themselves to a higher purpose, and it is only such men who can destroy themselves at the base level, thus achieve real immortality.

What we see in the actual conditions of life around us, day and night, is eating and drinking and sleeping, gossiping and talking about politics and abusing or talking ill of some one or the other and then going to bed. Next morning getting up again, we follow the same routine. The same breakfast, the same lunch, the same gossip, the same loose talk and then we go to bed once again. And this goes on continuously. Suddenly one morning we realize what we have been doing. Wasting our life, nothing else. Then comes the repentance. Where have I arrived? What could have I not done in those bygone years? If I had utilized every day of my life fully, I would not have felt so much repentance at the fag-end of life.

Shah Bhitai warns us in almost every third or fourth couplet of his *Risalo* about such tendencies of human beings, such as dreaming, gossiping, and sleeping. He says in *Sur Sasui Punhu*,

ڏونگر نه ڏوري، ستون ڪري سڪڻ جون،
گهرويني گهوري، مٿان پرينءَ جندڙو.

She is reluctant to explore and undertake a journey in the rocky terrain in search of her beloved. But she is constantly exhibiting anxiety and boasting about her attachment, while resting comfortably in her house. Instead of seeking and striving for her beloved she is talking of sacrificing her life for the sake of her love.

Selection from Shah Jo Risalo

Sirajul Haque Memon

1

Death, hundred times over,
Doth hardly intimidate those,
Who have heard the muse of Freedom:
The more, they articulate the word "Freedom"
The more they welcome,
Death, like the proverbial nothingness!

2

Never ask the lover the nature of pain,
The ache that he feels is inexplicable,
He seldom doth forbear,
The "Freedom", the Love that he cherishes:
Or Death, Like the proverbial nothingness!

3

Love is the call of Freedom,
Ask not its whys and wherefores!
Death is the call of love,
Ask not its whys and wherefores!

4

Let it be sufficient
That he burns on the barbecue,
In Love and for Freedom (for the country)!

5

Adorn yourself with Death, my friend,
That, indeed, is your ornament!
For, a retreat is unthinkable, a disgrace:
Death alone is the credential,
Of those who have loved (their country)!

6

Death is the sine qua non
Of lovers,
They cower not before the lance,
The shores (of Freedom) alone,
Ensure their commitment!

7

In death they laugh,
Such is their Love:
what insane desire---
In death they feel fulfillment!

8

In death, they feel fulfillment--
Lovers are a stranger breed:
Retreat they know not,
Truth they tread boldly,
The hazards notwithstanding!

9

My Love,
Enamored of the image in the mirror,
Blames the fantasy of love,
And falls in love instead!

10

Shrink, quack,
Why do you torment me so?
The panacea that you suggest,
Is but commonplace,
Death alone, in your own discipline,
Is the best medicine, unless-
Love resurrect, the Freedom,
The many splendoured vision
Of my love.

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11

Friends (Countrymen)!
The Death has called,
Who shall answer the clarion?
Only those, who in their hearts,
Nothing but love repose!

12

Death doth call,
All who have loved (their land)!
Indeed, it is not a call for misfits,
Come, my friends, who have loved,
And whose death is ordained!

13

Let me be, friend and foe alike,
Death and God, God and death,
Are but shadows of being,
and nothingness
For me my love!

14

The echo and the call
The muse and the mystery:
Listen,
The couple in unison!

15

My love
Like a fortress with million doors and windows,
Whence I glance knowingly:
Lo and behold,
All phenomena disappear,
Except my love!

16

My love is a many splendoured thing,
A million faces that I adore,
Like mankind- each his/her own love,
Come, my love,
Let others too revel in your reflections!

Part II

Literature on SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITAI

The Sufi Tradition In The Eighteenth Century

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Eighteenth-century Islam is something that is usually neglected by the historians of religion. Histories of Sufism in general end with the thirteenth, at the best the fifteenth century; the following period is, then, shortly classified as decadent. Certainly, there were many decadent mystics and would-be Sufis as they are criticized in Hijazi's satire which, published by A. J. Arberry, has apparently given the impression that most of them were so degenerate as to be almost outside the pale of Islam, or else, that their works were nothing but epigonic repetitions of what had been said better in previous centuries.

However, mystical thought and poetry flourished during the eighteenth century from Morocco to Islamic India. Suffice it to mention the beginnings of the Tijaniyya in North Africa, the oft-quoted prolific Sufi writer Abdul Ghani an-Nabulusi in Syria; Ibrahim Hakki Erzerumlu, the author of the highly interesting Marifet-name, and Ghalib Dede, the last great Mevlevi poet, in such as Shah Waliullah, Mazhar Janjanaan, and Mir Dard. Besides, we notice the amazing amount of mystical poets who sang in the regional languages of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Without studying the works of the mystical writers during the pre-modern period it will be difficult to appreciate the developments that set in, during the following century, for the rejuvenation and reform of Islam.

Poets who write in such 'esoteric' languages as Sindhi, Urdu, and Persian are liable to be misquoted by those who cannot read their works in the original, and from a superficial study of their writings such conclusions can be drawn as may or may not prove wrong in the long run.

I n the tides of history, the eighteenth century is usually considered to be the time of lowest ebb for the Islamic peoples between the Balkans and Bengal. Almost no trace of the past glory of the Islamic Empires was visible any longer; the political scene was ruled by internecine wars on the one hand, by the strong encroachment of European colonial powers upon the Islamic lands on the other hand, and in the cultural field the dusty veil of stagnation seemed to cover everything, not allowing of new enterprises for redirecting the spiritual energy of the Muslims.

Contrary to this deplorable condition of the Islamic East the historian sees the glory of Europe who had gained her stand in world history and was just passing through the Age of Reason, to culminate, eventually, in the French Revolution and in the independence of North America. It was a time of highest cultural activity in literature, philosophy and music, to mention only the most important fields, a time in which the borders of an outlook centering on Christian Europe opened and the East was, for the first time, considered worthy of an objective study.

The general political and social climate in Western Europe brought forth a new world-consciousness, but also an economic and political trend to expansion. It was only this latter aspect of 18th century Europe with which the Muslim countries were confronted. These countries, however, went through an age of stagnation and wars. That holds true for the Ottoman Empire with its Arabic provinces and Iran, for North Africa and Central Asia.

India herself, once the marvel of the world, was shaken by constant wars between the weak Muslim rulers and the Mahrattas and Sikhs as well as their Muslim neighbors from Iran and Afghanistan. Thus, the British East India company was able to slowly extend its rule over larger parts of the Subcontinent after the successful battle of Plassey in 1757. The Portuguese and French tried to defend their positions in Southern India where the Muslim rulers of the Deccan fought partly with them, partly against them.

It was, indeed, the 'twilight of the Mughals.' Still, 'Agra and Lahore of Great Moghul,' which, as Milton says, were shown at the beginning of creation to the wonder-stricken Adam, kept some of their old charm. But Delhi, the capital of Muslim India since 1200, was nearly destroyed under the continuous blows of fate. When Mir Dard, in his poetry and prose, often speaks of the 'rose garden of manifestation of Divine power,' one should not forget that in Persian poetical language the red rose is connected not only with the

idea of happiness or joy and love, but likewise with blood and wounds.

India had been under Muslim rule since the early Middle ages: the Arabs conquered Sindh, the southern part of present day Pakistan, in 711, and this province never ceased to be a center of Islamic studies and a seat of Islamic mysticism. From the year 1000 onward, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, descending 17 times from the Afghan Hills, conquered the northwestern part of the Subcontinent; thus, Lahore was to become an important center of Persian culture. The borders of the Muslim provinces slowly extended to the South and the East, and in about 1200, Delhi –with the magnificent building of the Qutb Minar –became the capital of the Muslim rulers, who from there, soon extended their influence to East Bengal and the Deccan. The Deccan, the Muslim kingdoms of Bijapur and Gujrat were independent for a long time, which resulted in special developments of Islamic culture and literature in the South.

The Mughal rule, which began in 1526 with Babur from the family of Tamerlane, is one of the most glorious epochs in Muslim history. Its beginning coincides with the high time of the Ottoman Empire (Sulaiman the Magnificent) and with the first decades of the Safawid rule that united Iran since 1501. The mid-16th and early 17th centuries are those periods when Muslim architecture from Adrianopol and Istanbul to Delhi and Agra reached its apex.

The borders of the later Mughal Empire included most of the Subcontinent. The last decades of the 17th century, however, were largely spent in wars with the Deccan states, where the Hindu Mah-rattas tried to regain their independence. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707 the internal weakness of the vast empire became visible and the different national and religious groups, long dissatisfied, found an opportunity to revolt against the Mughal rule. For the Muslims themselves were immersed in constant struggles, the weak rulers being mere puppets in the hands of shrewd politicians without more than very personal ambitions. External powers, like Nadir Shah of Iran, took advantage of the situation: he invaded the country and eventually looted Delhi in 1739; about 30,000 people were killed. The once splendid city never fully recovered from this blow. Nadir Shah's successor, Ahmad Shah Durrani, came allegedly as a helper against the growing Mahratta threat and invaded the northwestern provinces time and again; his campaign in 1757 was a similar catastrophe, all the worse, since internal feuds and the misrule of the

young minister Ghaziuddin had already impoverished the capital. Four years later, Ahmad Shah gained a decisive victory over the Mahrattas on the historic battlefield of Panipat; however, he did not use the fruits of his victory, and left Northern India to its fate. The exiled Mughal emperor Shah Alam II stayed for thirteen years in the Eastern provinces before he dared come back to Delhi in 1772, when the British and the Mahrattas had guaranteed his safe return. After sixteen years of reign in Delhi, he was cruelly blinded by Ghulam Qadir, a young leader of the Rohilla. This Afghan tribe that had settled north of Delhi and Rampur played an important role in internal politics during the mid-18th century especially since their intelligent leader, Najib ud-Daula was trusted by the Delhi orthodoxy and the Afghan invaders alike. The descriptions by both Muslim intellectuals and the British officers and administrators allow a glance at the hopeless condition of Delhi in those years. In 1803, the Mughal emperor was taken under British custody: his house continued ruling by name until 1857, the year of the so-called Mutiny.

The history of Indian Islam is, however, not only history of political facts, of expansion and breakdown, but is a spiritual history as well. It is the history of the century-long conflict between the Islamic concept of *tauhid*, strict monotheism, and Hinduism in its different manifestations which constituted, in the eyes of the pious Muslims, the very essence of idolatry and polytheism which had been condemned by the Quran. Without the help of the religious specialists, the rulers would scarcely have been able to maintain their rule over the vast country with its various racial and linguistic groups. The decisive force was, in the Islamization of India, however, not the activity of theologians and specialists in Islamic law and traditions who were sometimes attached to the court, but rather that of the mystics who had settled in the Subcontinent as early as the 11th century; the first Persian treatise on Islamic mysticism, the *Kashf al-mahjub*, was written by Ali Hujwiri—called Data Ganj Bakhsh—(d.1071), whose tomb in Lahore is still a place of pilgrimage for the people.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, mystical orders and brotherhoods crystallized out of formerly loosely united groups of disciples, who were introduced into the spiritualization of life by their religious guide, the *shaikh* or *pir*. The first representatives of such brotherhoods reached India in the beginning of the 13th century. Probably the most influential among them is Khwaja Mu'inuddin Chishti (d. 1236) from Eastern Iran, who settled in Ajmer in the heart of Rajas-

than, that had just been conquered by the Delhi kings. His strong personality, his preaching of love of the One God and love of the Prophet, reflected in love of man kind, won over considerable numbers of Hindus to Islam. His disciples and later members of the order wandered through the whole of India, from the Panjab (Fariduddin Shakarganj of Pakpattan, d. 1325) to the Deccan (Gisudaraz of Gulbaraga, d. 1422). One of the centers of the Chishtiyya was Delhi, where Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) spiritually guided the population during the reign of seven rulers.

Baha'uddin Zakariya (d. c. 1265) the Suhrawardi master settled in Multan, at the border of Sindh and the Panjab: one of the leading Persian mystical poets, Fakhruddin Iraqi, stayed with him for 25 years. The Suhrawardiyya, not as austere in their practices as the early Chishtiyya, sent their members throughout the country and gained disciples even in Eastern Bengal. But only in the late 14th century members of the most important order in the central Islamic countries, the Qadiriyya, reached India.

The orders, who helped in Islamizing the country, contributed also to the development of literature and, partly, music: mystical poetry in Persian, and later in the regional languages, was inspired from their centers. The disciples wrote down the *malfuzat*, the words and sayings of their masters. They allow us some insight into the spiritual, and also the social life of the Middle Ages, and complete thus the outlook of the official chronicles, for the Muslim saints rarely completely agreed with the politics of the ruling classes or the way of life of the feudal lords,—although, in later times, the borderline between the highly influential pir and the feudal lord was sometimes blurred, for spiritual influence not rarely resulted in political power.

Thanks to these groups, a number of classical works of Islamic mysticism were introduced in India. They were frequently commented upon, partly also translated from the original Arabic into Persian, or from Persian into Urdu. The ideas and poetical imagery of Fariduddin Attar (d. 1220) and Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273), the greatest Persian writing mystic, inspired generations of Sufis and poets so that allusions to their works are found in almost every mystical work composed in India. The work of Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), the Spanish-born mystic who had built a close system of mystical theosophy in his *Futuhat al-makkiyya* and the *Fusus al-hikam*, the 'Bezels of Wisdom', became known in the early 15th century, and taught the

Muslims the idea of *wahdat al-wujud*, the essential Unity of Being, according to which God and the creation can be understood as two aspects of one Reality. Thus, the central Islamic dogma of God's unity was overstressed and expanded into a *Weltanschauung* which has been called either 'pantheistic' or 'monistic'. Both terms, however, do not give full justice to Ibn Arabi's complicated system of thought. The terminology of the 'Great Master' has influenced, in the Islamic East, even those rejected his theories. The poets and, through them, the large masses interpreted his system in the simplified short sentence *hama ost*, 'Everything is He'.

The idea of an all embracing unity made some Muslim mystics discover similar thoughts in the religious systems of their Hindu neighbors. The Mughal ruler Akbar (reigned 1556 - 1605), as most of his family attached to the Chishti order, was certainly influenced by such ideas when he undertook to promote a deeper understanding among the different religions in his empire by arranging discussions of their representatives and by having translated into Persian the main religious and literary works of Hinduism. His great-grandson, Dara Shikoh, the heir apparent of the Mughal Empire, and member of the Qadiriyya, tried to realize this unity. He even undertook the translation of the Upanishads-- 'a book that is hidden' (Sura 56/78)--- into Persian.

The more orthodox circles did not approve of such a dangerous interpretation of Islam which seemed to blur the borders between the two religious communities. One should, however, never forget that even the most ardent defenders of *wahdat al-wujud* agreed that the person of the Prophet Muhammad was the locus of the manifestations of the Divine Names, the 'Perfect Man' *par excellence*, the highest model of humanity whom to imitate is the first and foremost duty of the believer. And Islam remained for all of them the last and most comprehensive Divine revelation which comprises in itself, and hence abolishes, the laws brought by every previous Prophet. The 'tolerance' of Islamic mysticism consists of its embracing all religions under the crown of that final revelation which was granted to Muhammad.

It is characteristic of the situation in 16th century India that the protest against the widespread theories of 'Everything is He' was launched again by mystical order, namely the Naqshbandiyya. This group had been given its rules by Baha'uddin Naqshband from Central Asia (d. 1389), and had deeply influenced life at the Timurid court of Herat where most intellectuals, including the great poet

Jami, attached themselves to it. Babur, the first Mughal emperor, knew the order quite well, for one of its centers was located in his home province Farghana; there two rivalling branches of the Central Asian Naqshbandiyya were to play a decisive political role in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The activity of the Naqshbandis in the Subcontinent was limited during the first century of Mughal rule. More emotional orders played a greater role. Only toward the end of Akbar's days, Khwaja Baqi billah, one of the leading masters of the order, came to India and gained a number of disciples very soon. Among them was Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), who tried to attract members of the Mughal court to the Naqshbandi path. Imprisoned for a year at Gwalior, he was soon released and eventually gained the favor of the emperor Jihangir. His aim was to go back to the pure teachings of Islam, which excludes a 'Unity of Being' but admits of the possibility of 'Unity of Vision,' *wahdat ash-shuhud*. i.e., in the moments of highest bliss the mystic eyewitnesses absolute Unity but knows that no essential union between creature and Creator is possible, for 'The Lord is Lord, and the servant servant,' as the formulation of this school holds. 'I am His servant' --- that is the highest station man can reach, for it is the station of the Prophet during his Nightly Journey (cf. Sura 17/1). The central thesis is not *hama ost*, 'Everything is He', but *huma az ost*, 'Everything is from Him' --a formulation which is, indeed, much closer not only to orthodox Islam but to the theories of unity as professed by the early mystics (which had been interpreted, during the centuries following Ibn Arabi, in the light of *wujudi* -theories).

Ahmad Sirhindi has been called, by the great philosopher Abdul Hakim Sialkoti, the *mujaddid-i alf-i thani*, the 'Renovator of the 2. Millenium,' since he appeared at the beginning of the second millenium of the Islamic era in order to restore orthodox Islam; and he has been praised by his admirers even in Turkey as the *imam-i rab-bani*, the Divinely bestowed leader of the community. However, the claims of saintship and charismatic leadership which Ahmad Sirhindi uttered, are expressions of such a fantastic self-consciousness that he, with his theories of the restoration of the first *m* of Muhammad's name, and his claim to be the *qayyum* by far surpasses the limits of what we would normally call 'orthodox Islam.' He saw himself and three of his descendants as divinely invested beings, higher even than the *qutb*, the 'Pole' of the traditional mystical hier-

archy, and destined to guide the Muslim people as *qayyum*. This remarkable self-consciousness of the Naqshbandi leaders, together with their skill in politics made them more and more influential in India. Ahmad Sirhindi's successors and followers successfully worked to penetrate into the court circles. Shah Jahan's second son, Aurangzeb Alamgir, lent his ear to their advice and fought against the ideals which led his elder brother Dara Shikoh to his attempts of mystical reconciliation between Islam and Hinduism. During Aurangzeb's reign, which lasted nearly half a century (1658-1707), music and fine arts were restricted. More than three decades after his death, members of the Sirhindi family still continued working behind the political scene, until the fourth *qayyum*, Pir Muhammad Zubair, died a few months after the destruction of Delhi by Nadir Shah ---his death coincides, so to speak, with end of the third period of Mughal rule which was followed, during one more century, by constant decline.

The Naqshbandiyya also spread in other parts of India, for instance in the Lower Indus Valley.

The other orders continued their activities; some of them had split up; forming numerous sub-groups. Almost every poet and writer was connected in some way with a mystical order. Thus, the whole mystical vocabulary, as developed during centuries, was practically common stock for all members of the society, down to the lowest strata. Poetry and prose written during this period can be understood and enjoyed only with a certain knowledge of its mystical background; for whether the population of the unhappy country would accept tribulations patiently in the feeling that 'Everything is from Him,' or would believe in the all embracing Unity of Being which showed its strange manifestations in suffering and pain --the mystical way was, for most of them, the one source of strength which enabled them to survive during the afflictions which were showered upon Northern India in the 18th century.

All tribulations notwithstanding, literature, and especially poetry, remained alive in India. It flourished at the courts, but in its vernacular form it was the delight of the illiterate villagers. The Muslims produced a vast literature in the classical Islamic languages, Arabic and Persian, but also in Turkish, and the longer and more regional languages like Sindhi, Panjabi, and Pashto developed fascinating poetical forms, while Urdu inherited the Persian refined tradition.

There was no dearth of Arabic writing scholars during the Mu-

ghal time. Even Akbar's court poet Faizi produced an Arabic commentary on the Quran, composed completely of undotted letters, an amazing, though not very useful, achievement. During the 17th century the whole corpus of theological studies was in Arabic, thus the works on tradition and history by the leading traditionist of Delhi, Abdul Haqq Dihlawi (d. 1642), or those on logic and philosophy from the pen of Abdul Hakim Sialkoti (d. 1656). Here belongs also the important collection of legal decisions according to Hanafi law compiled during the rule of Aurangzeb Alamgir, *fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*, a comprehensive work in whose preparation a great number of excellent scholars were involved. Shah Waliullah of Delhi, the mystic, traditionist and politician of the 18th century, continued writing prose and even poetry in the classical language of theology.

One of the greatest contribution to Arabic lexicography, the dictionary *Taj al-'arus*, is the work of an Indian scholar, and pupil of Shah Waliullah, Sayyid Murtaza (d. 1787), who, like many of his compatriots, had migrated to Zabid in Yemen.

Arabic was likewise used for poetry. In the kingdom of Golconda, a school of rather traditional Arabic poetry blossomed during the early 17th century. In the 18th century the learned Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (1704-1786) was tenderly called '*Hassan al-Hind*' because he composed many Arabic *qasidas* in honor of the Prophet Muhammad, and thus became comparable to Hassan ibn Thabit, the Prophet's panegyrist. Azad's uncle, Abdul Jalil (d. 1715) had likewise excelled in Arabic poetry. Both scholars were prolific writers in Persian, too.

Azad Bilgrami was also well versed in Turkish, a language which was often used in the higher circles in Mughal India after the first Mughal emperor Babur wrote his autobiography and several other works in his mother tongue, Chaghatay Turkish. Many of the Mughal generals and nobles who came from Central Asia continued in the use of their mother tongue --thus Bayram Khan (d. 1559), the faithful friend of the first three Mughal rulers, and his son Khankhanan Abdur Rahim, who both wrote poetry in Turkish. Already Amir Khosrau in the 13th century had boasted of his Turkish origin: Turk became synonymous with 'Muslim' and was also usually used in poetry as designation for the beautiful white, cruel beloved ruler as contrasted to the black Hindu slaves. Not few of the nobles around Delhi, even in the 19th century, claimed Turkish descendancy.

The most important language for literary works, however, was

still Persian, the official language of the Muslim rulers. They had settled in the northern part of the subcontinent shortly after 1000. Lahore was, in the 11th century, a center of Persian culture, with poets and mystics writing in this language. Then the center of gravity shifted to Delhi, and although Persian was spoken and written even in Bengal and in the south, Persian literature proper was connected mainly with the northern plains of India.

It is impossible to enumerate the large number of historians who wrote their works, since in the 13th century, in the official court language, or the immense literature of Sufism which was composed from approximately the same period onwards.

The great master during the Delhi Sultanate was Amir Khosrau (d. 1325). He was a musician, poet, rhetorician, and his highly sophisticated style provides the reader with most intelligently put puns and precious images. His epical poems contain some interesting details about India. His younger contemporary Hasan Dihlawi (d. 1328), is sweeter and more tender, less artificial than he, but a more genuine mystic. In the Deccan the Chishti saint Gisdaraz (d. 1422) wrote his exuberant mystical Persian poems, but is also the author of one of the first works in Dakhni Urdu. Numberless minor poets surrounded the rulers and the saints everywhere.

In the time of Akbar a great number of poets flocked from Iran to the art-loving Mughal court and influenced the style of the indigenous poets. Probably the greatest among them is Urfi of Shiraz (died at the age of 35 in 1591), whose *qasidas* in their glowing darkness and their majestic wording are reminiscent of heavily brocaded garments of purple velvet. His contemporary Faizi (d. 1595), more cerebral than he, is a master of every artistic form. Then follows the long line of the poets who have contributed to the development of the so-called Indian style: Naziri (d. 1612), and Talib-i Amuli (d. 1626), Kalim (d. 1651) and Ghani Kashmiri (d. 1661), Qudsi (d. 1646) and Fani (d. 1671) and innumerable others who praised in highly sophisticated words the world-encompassing strength and mildness of their rulers. Mughal miniatures of these decades often correspond to subjects described in their lyrics and panegyrics. They had to invent new figures of speech; for the outward forms of the Persian poem, the *qasida* and the *ghazal* with their monorhyme and their strict metrical rules as well as the *mathnawi*, used for didactic and narrative poetry, remained untouched. However, the images were partly broken and put together in surprising patterns like the glass pieces in a kaleidoscope. Instead of the images of classical poetry

which had in themselves a certain logic, pseudophilosophical concepts, and artificial images became common. The spheres of hearing and seeing are strangely blended, and some new images taken from the material culture of the 17th century are used in this poetry which conveys the feeling that the poets were, at heart, nostalgic in the dazzling outward beauty of the 'Indian summer.' Were they homesick for Iran, or did they anticipate the gathering of those dark clouds whose lightning was to destroy the harvest of this whole super-refined culture? Or was it simply a convention that now words like 'shroud,' 'breaking,' 'blistered feet,' 'firestricken nest,' etc., were used much more frequently than in previous times; or that the poets compared themselves often to the trembling and melting dewdrop, or spoke of the firework of their burning hearts? The last master of this style is Bedil (d. 1721), the difficulty of whose poetry and prose is notorious. Still, his verses, contrary to those of many of his contemporaries, are often so filled with sentiment, and reach such a power of expression that one is tempted to translate them into very modern poetical language. Bedil and Nasir Ali Sirhindi (d. 1697), who later in life joined the Naqshbandi order, mark the limit which the Indian style could reach; 'his poems are more twisted than the curls of the lovely girls,' says one of Nasir Ali's admirers; but Persian-born poets, like Ali Hazin who reached India in the 1730's found the works of these two masters ridiculous and nonsensical.

However, the influence of Bedil and Nasir Ali (which proved dangerous for minor poets who were not endowed with a similar poetical vision) continued. In the 19th century Ghalib, the greatest Urdu and Persian writing poet of his time, remained, for a while, strongly under their spell. Even a modern writer of completely different mental stature, Muhammad Iqbal, admits his indebtedness to Bedil's poetry for the formation of his thought.

Still, Persian poetry had reached a kind of impasse; Persian prose remained, perhaps, alive longer. Ahmad Sirhindi's letters are an example for such prose, and so are the mystical writings of Prince Dara Shikoh, including his translation of the Upanishads. In the period of Aurangzeb not as many great works in Persian were produced as in the previous decades, for poetry had retired into the lofty corners of nearly incomprehensible stylistic difficulties. Miniature painting, too, slowly lost its glamour and music was forbidden.

One of the surprises in Indian cultural history around 1700 is, that member of the 'anti-artistic' Naqshbandiyya order were instru-

mental in the development of a new literary medium which was, after Aurangzeb's death, to supersede Persian and to become the typical language of Indian Muslims: that is Urdu.

A literature in the southern form of Urdu, Dakhni, had existed already since the Middle Ages. Here, too, the mystics had played a decisive role in developing the language, since they needed a medium for conveying their message to the large masses who were neither able to follow the theological Arabic nor the administrative and literary Persian. Among the Dakhni writing poets, the Qutbshahi Kings of Golconda (1530-1687) and the Adilshahis of Bijapur (1535-1686) occupy a prominent place. In the late 17th century, Wali Deccani elaborated his mother tongue in poems, in which he uses all devices of classical Persian poetry. Shortly after 1700, this poet was attracted to Delhi by the fame of a Naqshbandi mystic and poetical preceptor, Shah Gulshan, thanks to whom his poetry became famous in the capital of the Mughal Empire. Apparently, the Muslims of Northern India, after the breakdown at Aurangzeb's death in 1707, needed a new medium of expression which even the man in the bazaar would understand. Thus, all of a sudden, a remarkable literature in Urdu emerged in the first half of the 18th century in Delhi.

The situation in the literary field does, by no means, reflect the deplorable state of the Indian Muslims. On the contrary, this 18th century is amazingly fertile in poetical expressions in all the languages of Muslim India.

It is typical that even the great warrior, the 'liberator' of Northwest India, Ahmad Shah Durrani, was a fine poet in his mother tongue, Pashto. This language which had been used for centuries in the border areas of India and Afghanistan had become a perfect instrument of poetical expression in the previous century when the tribal chief Khushhal Khan Khattak (d. 1689) composed numberless lyrical, epical and didactic poems which reflect not only his large horizon and his vast range but also his stunning command over a language which was, until then, only rarely used for higher literature (though the folk poetry of the Pathans is partly of touching beauty and, in the genre of the three-lined *landay*, of almost *haiku*-like precise tenderness). Ahmad Shah Durrani does not reach the breadth of variations found in the work of 'the father of Pashto poetry,' but his poems, too, show an artistic feeling and his interest in the mystical strands of Islam, and are counted among the finest products of the Pashto language.

The countries which were conquered first by Nadir Shah and then by Ahmad Shah Durrani, Sindh and the Panjab, could likewise boast of a rich literary heritage. In the Panjab, popular mystical poetry may have emerged as early as in the days of Fariduddin Shakar-ganj, the Chishti saint of Pakpattan (d. 1265). Numerous folk songs and ballads existed but were never committed to writing. But the vast collection of Sikh sacred poetry as preserved in the *Adi Granth* shows many of the features that recur in Muslim Panjabi and Sindhi mystical songs. The golden age of Muslim Panjabi poetry is the late 17th century, e.g., the time when the province was invaded one time after the other by Mahrattas, Sikhs, and, in between, by the liberating Muslim armies. After the short ecstatic poems of Sultan Bahu (d. 1691) the most famous of which are composed in the traditional form of *siharfi*, 'Golden Alphabet,' Bullhe Shah's personality (d. 1752) looms large in the Panjabi poetry of the 18th century, so much so that he has even been called the 'Rumi of Panjab.' His poems are traditional in their forms, using *siharfi*, 'Golden Alphabet,' *baramah* (poems which describe the lovers' feelings during the twelve months) and others, and he had made use of the whole mystical vocabulary and imagery which had been inherited from classical times. He adds, however, to their beauty by combining them with the rural imagery of his homeland so that they could be understood by every villager and ploughman and sung by the large masses who would flock to the shrines of the saints, hoping for material and spiritual help in this time of deepest depression. Bullhe Shah is, like all the folk poets, a defender of the unity of Being. The same is true for Ali Hayder who died in 1785 near Multan. Shortly after his death the classical work of Panjabi literature was composed: Warith Shah's version of *Hir Ranjha* (around 1794). the story of the unhappy lovers was known since the days of Akbar, and had been turned into a popular tale in which the hero and the heroine undergo all kinds of tribulation and eventually are exiled, or die. Warith Shah has used this story as a vehicle for mystical thought, and interspersed it with mystical explanations; it is not told in logical sequence, for one expected everybody to know the contents, and the author could concentrate upon crucial scenes and dialogues, songs and prayers (just as it is the case in the Sindhi mystical versions of folk tales). Numerous variants of *Hir Ranjha* exist not only in Panjabi but also in Sindhi, Persian, and Balochi, but Warith Shah's version has never lost its attraction, and even today a Panjabi will be

deeply touched when this moving story is sung.

In spite of the overall activity of writers, theologians, and mystics throughout Muslim India, two areas can be singled out as particularly interesting in the history of mystical poetry in the Subcontinent. They are, as is to be expected, the capital Delhi with its long history, and the Lower Indus Valley. Although both areas had to suffer under the breakdown of the Mughal Empire, and the invasions from their Western neighbors, they produced an amazing amount of mystical writing and poetry. Delhi, once the center of Persian literature in the Subcontinent, now became the place where Urdu poetry developed to its most beautiful expression. Shah Gulshan and his disciple Muhammad Nasir Andalib, Mir Dard's father, were prominent members of the group who encouraged the development of Urdu poetry. In poetical meetings the forms and figures of Urdu poetry were discussed, new words adopted, awkward expressions discarded, so that the language became polished and refined in a comparatively short time, and was able to express the different moods of the population of Delhi, and later, of Lucknow, and eventually, of the whole of Muslim India. Most divergent types of poets are found in Delhi at almost the same time: besides the so-called *ihamists*, who transplanted the ambiguous style of some of the Persian writing artists into Urdu, there lived in the first generation after Shah Gulshan and Khan-i Arzu (d. 1756), the 'four pillars of Urdu': Mir Taqi Mir (1724-1810), the love-poet, whose sighs still touch every heart, and who belonged to the close friends of Mir Dard, the mystic, who has in his turn written the most perfect Urdu mystical verses. Besides them we find the overpowering personality of Sauda (1713-1780), mainly praised as satirist, criticizing the social and political misery of 18th century India, but also an important religious poet of the Shi'a persuasion. The 'fourth pillar' is Mazhar Janjanaan (c. 1700-1781). He was also a member and successful leader of the *Naqshbandi mujaddidi* school. Yet, more important for the history of Urdu literature than Mazhar is Mir Hasan (d. 1786) who, in his early youth, attended the poetical sessions of Mir Dard. He has gained fame by his *mathnawi Sihr ul-bayan* which, though not absolutely original in form or contents, is one of the loveliest products of Urdu narrative poetry, and whose atmosphere is somehow reflected in some of the miniatures from the later 18th century with their strangely bewitching style. Small wonder that the members of the Mughal court, long famous for its literary ambitions, became interested in Urdu poetry; the luckless Shah Alam II (1761-1806) wrote poetry

under the penname *Aftab*, 'Sun,' and attended the musical meetings of Mir Dard.

Delhi was also the place where three leading mystics lived and worked simultaneously, each of them claiming highest spiritual experiences, and trying in his own environment to ameliorate the situation of the afflicted Muslims of Northwest India. All of them were related in some way to the Naqshbandi order which, as we saw, was most influential among the poets, too. It is regrettable that we have barely any information about the relations among these three great masters, e.g., Shah Waliullah, Mazhar Janjanaan, and Mir Dard. Among them Shah Waliullah has gained greatest fame as a reformer, as the translator of the Quran into Persian, and also as the politically minded leader of the community who did not hesitate to invite Ahmad Shah Durrani Abdali to fight the Mahrattas. Shortly after the third battle of Panipat, which took place in 1761, Shah Waliullah passed away in 1762, almost two decades before both Mazhar and Mir Dard. His political engagement has often overshadowed other aspects of his teachings, which are not easy to appreciate for a Western reader, since they are couched in a terminology very much his own, and which had to be explained by his grandson Ismail Shahid in a book called *'Abaqat*. Shah Waliullah's father, a Hanafi Jurist with mystical inclinations, had helped in the compilation of the *Fatawa-yi 'Alamgiri*. His young son, born in 1703, spent some time in Mecca, and returned to Delhi in 1730. For three decades he worked to help the Muslims of Delhi and all India by his writings and actions, for, as numerous revelations had told him, he had become the vicegerent of the Prophet 'in blaming.' Anything but modest, he claimed to have been granted the highest possible ranks in the religious hierarchy, and been taught *hikma*, wisdom, which is, in his theories, the last step before Prophethood: that he was promised to enter Paradise without reckoning is almost commonplace with later Muslim mystics. Shah Waliullah was certain that God had bestowed upon him the 'robe of *mujaddidiyya*' e.g., of renewing the Islamic faith and restoring it to its pristine purity, but he even claimed to have been invested with the robe of *haqqaniyya*, the state of Divine Truth,¹ which deprived him of all logical understanding, so that he experienced 'how God talked upon my tongue.' His role as a 'blaming reformer'² is best expressed in a long address in which he scolds the Muslims in holy anger: he attacks the scholars who have given up studying the Prophetic traditions but rather learn unneces-

sary things like grammar and Greek philosophy; the false Sufis; the perverted preachers; the kings who ought to fight for the extension, or at least the defense of Islam; the grandees who could not care less when wine shops, gambling dens, or brothels are installed in the realm of their fiefs; soldiers who shave their beards and think only of amusements; artisans who indulge in drinking, adultery, and visits to allegedly sacred places, etc.³ This piece, in its unusually straightforward language, shows best that Waliullah's interest lay in the purification of the Muslim community for a better life here, and even more in the Otherworld.

It is perhaps more than sheer accident that his main work in Arabic, *Hujjat Allah al-baligha*, was finished in 1740-41, shortly after Nadir Shah's invasion, that means, at the same time when Dard's father Andalib was composing his *Nala-yi 'Andalib* in mourning Pir Muhammad Zubair, the last *qayyum*. Shah Waliullah's attempts to bridge the gap between the different *madhhabs* in Islam, as well as the tension between the adherents of *wahdat al-wujud* and *wahdat ash-shuhud* can be understood from the situation in the country; in this respect he was a true mystical leader who relied upon the old Sufi maxim which is often quoted in his works:

Our signs are different, but Thy beauty is one, and everything points to that beauty.

Maulana Rumi's parable of the blind and the elephant was transformed by him into a story of blind men touching a tree, for truth is a big tree from which each person can grasp only one leaf, one branch, the bark, or one fruit. It was also this practical aspect of his teachings that led him to translate the Quran into Persian in order to bring people back to the original text, and avoid the useless study of too many commentaries which cover the sacred meaning rather than explain it. To live with the Quran, as it had been done by the Sufis of yore, was his ideal. A true Sufi has to live exclusively on the Quran and the Prophetic tradition. Therefore, he heavily attacks those Sufis who talk about 'what they think is truth,' seduce people by miracle mongering, and are nothing but *karamat furushan*, 'sellers of miracles.' He sees in them the 'highwaymen and robbers of religion,' while his colleague Mir Dard uses the expression 'shopkeeper saints' for these characters, whom he even calls 'pig natured'. The reformatory zeal of Waliullah leads him to even regard the Sufi books, 'which may have a wonderful effect on the elect, to be deadly poison for the ordinary people,' and would have liked to

declare as infidels those who perform pilgrimages to sacred places: 'That is a sin, greater than murder and adultery.'⁴ Utterances like this may be one of the reasons why the followers of his school were later often branded as 'Indian Wahhabis,' since the Wahhabis in the Arabian peninsula mercilessly destroyed all places of saintworship. --Shah Waliulla tried to explain the secrets of religion in a way that is sometimes almost foreshadowing the 'naturism' of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan more than a century later. That is particularly true for his prophetology, where he now and then even explains miracles like the splitting of the moon (Sura 54/1) as a natural phenomenon. Prophecy, according to his view, shows itself in different ways by polishing the innate qualities of a people as beautifully as possible. The innate character of the nation is the raw material on which the Prophet works, be it a candle or a clot of earth. This kind of socio-geographical explanation of the various activities of the Prophets is for him also the reason why the mystical orders differ in their approach: the Turks, living in a cold climate, hence stronger in their 'bestial' powers, needed and indeed produced a *tariqa* like the Naqsh-bandiyya, which is best for crushing the lower instincts.⁵

Shah Waliullah appears to us as a strange figure in the history of Islamic mysticism, combining great pride in his visions and his role as the true reformer of a rotten society with an extremely complicated web of thoughts, expressed in various linguistic means. He wrote poetry in Persian and Arabic, and a few verses in Urdu, his Arabic following the traditional models of devotional verse, and his Urdu certainly not 'great poetry.' His many faceted character still awaits his biographers.

Waliullah's friend and colleague Mazhar Janjanaan, who was highly respected in the Delhi community, and perhaps even better known to many of the pious in the capital, was a different character. This 'saintly, purified, dervish-like, scholarly, perfect, famous, incomparable person,' as Mir calls him, followed more closely the normal Naqshbandi line.

Born in 1699 in Agra as son of one of Aurangzeb's courtiers, Mazhar became the disciple of Nur Muhammad Bada'uni, a Naqshbandi saint, at the age of 18. His master was a disciple of Muhammad Ma'sums's *khalifa*. Then, the young man sought the instruction of Sa'dullah Gulshan who, however, had entrusted his followers to Pir Muhammad Zubair, the *qayyūm*. Muhammad Zubair, in turn, sent Mazhar to Hafiz Sa'dullah. Mazhar claimed also to be initiated,

partly in *uwaisi* succession, into the other orders. According to his own words, 'he began to sweep the dervish lodges at the age of thirty,' that is shortly after Gulshan's death in 1728.

Mazhar is recognized as one of the Four pillars of Urdu literature, although his output in Urdu is comparatively small. Everyone knows Sauda's remark about his 'mongrel' style, culminating in the Urdu proverb:

It is the washerman's dog, belonging neither to the *ghat* nor to the house!

But this satire may have been caused as much by rhetorical consideration as by religious prejudices, for Sauda, an outspoken Shia, naturally disliked the strictly anti-Shia attitude of Mazhar who followed, here, the ideals of the *Naqshbandiyya mujaddidiyya*. Mazhar went so far as to compose a defense of the Omayyad ruler Mu'awiya, whose son Yazid is cursed by all Shiites as the murderer of the Prophet's grandson Husain in Kerbela; the Delhi mystic, however, wanted this just and successful ruler to be treated like any other companion of the Prophet. His uncompromising attitude even caused his death: at the age of 82 in 1781, he was killed when ridiculing a Muharram procession. Earlier in that century, Shah Waliullah too had protested against the celebrations of the Ashura Day, and although both Naqshbandi mystics were deeply attached to the Prophet and his family, they defended the view that the Sunnite faction is, for various reasons, the true form of Islam, whereas the Shia claims are vain (*batil*).

Mazhar's letters addressed to his *khalifa* Thana'ullah in Panipat often deal with domestic problems, and with instruction in the path, but are much more sober and matter-of-fact than the high-flown words of both Waliullah and Dard. More than these two, Mazhar concentrated upon the leadership of his *tariqa*, the Shamsiyya Mazhariyya, which seems to have flourished in Delhi and environment, for not less than 49 of the *khalifas* are known by name. The stern Naqshbandi saint who was, in his youth, enraptured by the beauty of the young talented poet Taban, was extremely strict in keeping his ritual duties; he once remarks that one should pray not less than 60 *rak'as* (prayer units) during 24 hours; that is more than three times the prescribed number. His striving for perfection revealed itself in the fact that he married a perfectly intolerable woman in order to be polished by living with her; his letters sometimes point to his matrimonial difficulties.

It is interesting to see that Mazhar, his orthodox views notwith-

standing, did not consider the Hindus as sheer *mushrikun*, 'heathen,' but rather as followers of some sort of monotheism; but he, of course, maintained that Muhammad's revelation had put an end to all previous religions.⁶

Shah Waliullah and Mazhar seem to have been on friendly terms; some letters by the former reveal his admiration for his contemporary because of his faithful adherence to the Quran and the Prophetic tradition, and Mazhar used some of his colleague's writings in his instruction, as is understood from his letters. The relations were strengthened by Thana'ullah Panipati who, besides becoming Mazhar's dearest spiritual successor, was Waliullah's disciple in *hadith* and commented upon several of the master's treatises. Both mystics, too, admired and used ash-Shadhili's *Hizb al-bahr*, to which Waliullah even wrote a Persian commentary: the famous prayer of the 13th century Egyptian Sufi belonged, for a long time, to the most cherished works of devotional literature, even in countries where the Shadhiliyya order itself had never taken deeper roots.

It is difficult to judge the relations of Mir Dard with his two senior compatriots. He never mentions any of them by name in his writings, nor do they mention him or his father. Once, a friendly remark about Mazhar is found in a later source-- 'he recognized the light of saintliness in the face of one of Mazhar's disciples' (F 142) - and as much as the claims of Muhammad Nasir Andalib and his son Dard to represent the true Muhammadan religion may have conflicted with Shah Waliullah's grandson, Ismail Shahid. Before detailed studies and comparisons of the three mystics and their theories are possible, one has to discuss them one by one. Their approach to life and religion is largely the same and can be summed up in a verse by Dard's father Muhammad Nasir:

Strive to find the everlasting kingdom

And that you'll find from the Muhammadan law (NA I 791).⁷

All the three alike stressed the importance of the unmitigated Divine Law as the center of Muslim life, all the three attacked philosophy and fake Sufism, and refused to be called 'Sufis,' a term that had deteriorated during their days even more than before; all the three were poets in Persian and Urdu, and Waliullah also in Arabic-- but while he had become the center of interest lately for his religious reforms and his political engagement, and Mazhar remains the model of a true Naqshbandi leader, Mir Dard, the youngest of them, is consid-

ered the most successful mystical poet in the Urdu language, and regarded himself as the elected leader of his community.

Ten years before Mazhar Janjanaan, a man was born in the distant Indus Valley who was destined to become the greatest mystical poet in the Sindhi language. It is Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit (1689 - 1752) who died ten years before Shah Waliullah left this valley of tears.

Sindh has always been praised as the country with a particularly strong inclination towards mysticism. A Sindhi author writes, and is the translator of the feelings of most of his compatriots:

Sindh has been flattened and has been in a state of negation. This is the cause of the many disadvantages from which it suffers; but it has been also the cause of a great blessing, a great advantage of which other places in India cannot boast, something which is priceless in its value, something of which India is in need.⁷

namely, of the mystical tradition. From the day that Lal Shahbaz Qalandar settled in Sehwan in the 13th century, and Baha'uddin Zakariya established the Suhrawardi center at the northernmost border of the country, in Multan, Sindh had produced an immense number of mystics, whose shrines are scattered all through the Indus Valley, and who invented short songs in their mother tongue to express the mysteries of love and union. Perhaps the most typical story in this respect is that of Divan Gidumal, the minister of the Kalhora princes, and his reaction to Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion, which took place during Shah Abdul Latif's life time. He offered the invading monarch two bags which, as he said,

contain the most valuable of Sindh's gifts; they contain the holy dust from the tombs of numerous saints and Pirs of Sindh.⁸

Sindh was, since 1595, part of the Mughal Empire, and although representatives of the Delhi court came there, the indigenous rulers enjoyed much freedom. The first obvious sign of the struggle for power in the lower Indus Valley becomes visible in 1717, when a mystical rebel was persecuted under the pretext that he tried to overthrow the established rule. The tragic story of Shah Inayat of Jhok, whose successful mystical preaching attracted many disciples from the mystical centers of the country, but also laborers from the neighboring big farms led his adversaries to denounce him at court; for during the confused situation in Delhi between the reign of Farukh Siyar and that of Muhammad Shah it was easy to sow mistrust. The Kalhora clan from Upper Sindh, particularly active in the

struggle against Inayat, soon afterwards became independent in Sindh. Shah Inayat was besieged in his Khanqah Jhok, and had to surrender to the overwhelming army that came from various places in Sindh and Hind. He was executed in a January 1718, and his fate has inspired many Sufi poets, Hindus and Muslims alike, to write touching poetry; he becomes 'the Hallaj of Sindh' due to his death at the hands of the establishment, and to his overwhelming mystical 'state.' It is possible that Shah Abdul Latif alluded to his fate in some of his verses; in any case he has quoted a Persian line usually connected with Shah Inayat.

At the same time, the 'Naqshabandi reaction' had set in the Lower Indus Valley too, mainly led by Abul-qasim Naqshbandi, a follower of Ahmad Sirhindi's grandson Shah Saifuddin ibn Urwat al-Wuthqa Ma'sum. By his disciples and friends, the first theological treatises in the Sindhi language are composed in the first half of the 18th century, beginning with the *Muqaddamat as-salat*, Preliminary discourse on Prayer, by Mian Abul-Hasan (d. 1711). This treatise, written in 1700, deals with 130 questions concerning the ritual practices of Islam, and is the first major didactic poem in Sindhi. Of course, the rhyme-scheme is utterly simple, using the device of *alif-i ishba*, which means the filling up of the last consonants with a long 'a' so as to produce a rhyming effect. Here, Sindhi is for the first time written in the Arabic characters as they were to form, one and a half centuries later, the basis of the standard Sindhi alphabet as introduced by Sir Bartle Frere, and used up to our day in both India and Pakistan. Another prolific religious author in Sindhi was Muhammad Mu'in, a mystically minded person; although he was a disciple of Abul-qasim Naqshbandi he was a great friend of Shah Abdul Latif, and it is said that he composed among others both a Persian *Risala-yi uwaisiyya*, concerning the mystical introduction into the Path without the guidance of a living master: the initiation through the spirit of a deceased saint or through the Prophetsaint Khidr was considered valid in most Sufi circles. His Naqshbandi education did not prevent him from writing poetry in Persian (pen-name *Taslim*) and Hindi (Pen-name *Bairagi*), and he loved music and mystical dance. That is why his works were attacked by his younger compatriot Makhdum Muhammad Hashim ibn Abdul Ghafur (1692-1761), the qadi of Thatta, which was still the center of the province of Sindh. The Makhdum, who is buried on the famous Makli Hill near Thatta (the last resting place of 125,000 saints, as legend has it) was

a prolific writer in Sindhi, Arabic, and Persian, and with the support of the Kalhora princes relentlessly fought against the innovations that had spoiled Islam in his days. Out of his more than 300 works some deal with popular customs exactly as those written by the great Delhi Naqshbandis, thus, when he attacks the Muharram celebrations, which were celebrated on Makli Hill. When he describes in his Sindhi poetry, *Qut al 'ashiqin*, the lofty qualities of the Prophet, he is exactly in line with his contemporaries in the capital. Commentaries of part of the Quran in Sindhi and of the whole Book in Arabic opened the way for his followers to comment upon and translate the Holy Writ into their mother tongue. Makhdum Hashim's Sindhi *Tafsir Hashimi* was usually the first book given to children in the Quran schools, and belongs to the first Sindhi books ever printed.

In his time appeared so to speak a renovation of Islam, and every month some Hindus found salvation from the meanness of infidelity thanks to his laudable striving.⁹

Thus says the famous writer of Sindh history, Mir Ali Shir Qani' (1725-1789), who belonged also to one of the Naqshbandi families. His ancestors had reached the Indus Vally in the 16th century, coming from Shiraz. Qani's work on the famous inhabitants of Sindh (*Tuhfat al-kiram*), his biographies of poets (*Maqalat ash-shuara*) and his numerous works on the affiliations of Sindhi *tariqas* show him as one of the most important writers in the Persian language in India during the 18th century. His *Maklinama* is probalty the most charming account we possess about the famous Makli Hill near the capital; many of the buildings which are no longer existent, can be reconstructed from his remarks, and his notes about the festivities, the sessions of music and mystical dance, as they were held there in constant succession gives the modern reader a wonderful picture of popular mystical religion in 18th century Sindh.

Another Naqshabandi mystic of Sindh, and of quite a different formation, was Makhdum Abdur Rahim Girhori (1739-1778), the *khalifa* of the famous saint Makhdum Muhammad Zaman who, in turn, was a disciple of Mian Abul-qasim Naqshabandi and Mian Muhammad Thattawi. Girhori, contrary to the Naqshabandis of Thatta, was little interested in legal problems; the energetic man even threw an ink stand at a scholar's head while attacking the 'dry trees of Makhdum Muhammad Hashim's school.' He completely relied upon Quran and tradition, and led a perfectly ascetic life, with long periods

of fasting, which were made even more difficult since he used to take a purgative every third day. Besides, he was a good writer who commented upon his master's Sindhi apophthegmata in Arabic, and composed poetical commentaries of several suras of the Quran. Most of his books were, however, destroyed during the Afghan raids in Upper Sindh in 1781. Perhaps the finest expression of his mystical prophetology, which is in some way reminiscent of Dard's deep mystical love of the Prophet is his rhymed commentary on *Surat al-Kauthar*, the favorite theme of mystical veneration of the Prophet. A verse by him expresses also his admiration for Shah Abdul Latif, whom he may have met when still a child.

Girhori followed the truly mystical ideal of being killed on the way towards the beloved, as it was expressed in thousands of verses in Persian and Sindhi; but, for him this longing took a particular form, e.g., he wanted to be a true martyr, shedding his blood for the defense of the true faith. Thus, he set out with 72 companions to destroy the Shiva idol in Hathungo, District Khairpur, and was killed there as he had hoped.

It would be wrong, however, to regard Girhori as a typical exponent of Sindhi Sufism. On the whole, there was 'of common basis of understanding, by Muslim and Hindu alike, of the mystical message of Islam,' as H. T. Sorley says correctly. To his analysis of the complex religious situation in 18th century Sindh-- which contains the 'almost incredible veneration for sayyids as such and a great accretion of superstitious practices in the belief of the multitude' we may add that the mystical understanding between the two great communities may perhaps have been facilitated by the activities of the Ismaili missionaries who came to Sindh in the 14th and 15th centuries, after an Ismaili kingdom had existed in Multan around 900. Whatever the reason be that 'neither Hindus nor Muslims are orthodox in Sindh'¹⁰ and that still in the 1920's, there were 'numerous Hindus and amongst them some of the best brains of Sindh, old and new, who are Sufi by religion'¹¹ --it remains a fact that a number of Hindus became devoted disciples of Muslim saints and did not hesitate to compose religious poetry in honor of Muslim saints and even of the Prophet of Islam. The most famous case is that of Shaikh Tahir, called by the Hindus Lal Udero, who is venerated by members of both communities, and about whose ecstatic 'states' strange legends are told.¹² Shah Abdul Latif's admiration for the true Yogis belongs to this group of phenomena, and fits very well into

the religious situation in the country.

Shah Abdul Latif was born into a family of mystics who lived near Hala; his father, Shah Habib, was a descendant of one of the first noted poets in his mother tongue, Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri; about his mother's family the traditions are not unanimous. Yet, it is said that he (like Mir Dard) was a *sayyid*, his lineage going back to the seventh *imam* Musa 'al-Kazim. Shah Abdul Latif spent three years with a group of yogis, wandering through the country, up to the sacred mountain Hinglaj in Balochistan.¹³ Later Latif settled in Bhit, where he died without issue in 1752, leaving behind him the collection of thirty Sindhi poems that has become known as the *Risalo*. That was the technical term for collections of poetry which are arranged according to the musical modes. Mir Ali Shir Qani' claims in his two major historical works that the mystical poet was *ummi*, 'illiterate;' but that is impossible to accept when one enters into the complicated web of thoughts displayed in the poems, and decorated with Arabic quotations, or allusion to Persian mystical poetry. Shah Latif was an excellent musician, who even invented a new type of *tambura* (drone instrument), and whose blending of traditional Indian raga and Sindhi folk tunes enhances the beauty of his verses which ought to be sung, not analyzed, to enjoy their full charm.

Shah Abdul Latif's *Risalo*, written in Indian meters, contains a storehouse of legends, tales, and Sufi topics; but he never tried to rationalize or to systematize his thoughts, and it is not known that he should have written any theoretical statement about his mystical experiences. He lived his Divine love, and he sang of it --nothing else.

One of the Persian chronograms composed at his death and inscribed at the northern side of the dome says:

When he became intoxicated by union from the goblet of 'Come back'
(Sura 89/17)

The hidden inspirer said: 'The year of his journey was *Ridwan-i-Haqq*,'
(God's satisfaction) = 1165.¹⁴

Latif's tradition was taken up and developed by Sachal Sarmast (1739-1826), who met him when still a boy. His ecstatic poetry surpassed all limits of expression. In Shah's poetry, allusions and subtle images lead the understanding listener into the secrets of love, longing, and union; in Sachal's poems (he wrote in four languages: Sindhi, Siraiki, Urdu, and Persian) the mysteries of all embracing Unity are put openly before the listener, and his verse reminds the reader often of the enthusiastic folksongs by Turkish medieval mys-

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tics, like those of Yunus Emre (d. 1321).

Many more names of Sufis and poets could be enumerated when dealing with 18th century Sindh so that Burton claims with full right in 1851:

As regards the literature of the Sindhi tongue, it may safely be asserted that no vernacular dialect in India, at the time of our taking the country, possessed more, and few so much, original composition.¹⁵

The problems of this part of the Subcontinent were almost the same as those that led to Delhi's breakdown: the collapse of the Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb's death, manifested itself in the internal struggle among the governors; eventually, the native Kalhor dynasty took over the rule in Upper and later in Lower Sindh, only to become the vassals of the invading Nadir Shah, who first conquered Sindh and the Panjab before he reached Delhi in 1739. Almost the same situation repeated itself when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India, although his influence on the scene in Sindh in not as important as it was in the northern areas of present day Pakistan. The Kalhor dynasty, in turn, was overthrown by the former disciples of their saintly ancestor, Adam Shah Kalhor, who had been executed by the central government in 1651. The Talpurs, who thus came to power in 1781, ruled the country until it was conquered by the British in 1843.

Just as the new spirit of Urdu poetry developed in 18th century Delhi, while the leading mystics looked for ways to lead their followers out of the darkness of the political situation, thus in Sindh, too, the 18th century can be called the most important period for the formation of mystical poetry and prose, and for the activities of many saintly persons whose works were meant to give spiritual nourishment to the suffering people. Thus, the 18th century, politically perhaps the most saddening phase of Indo-Muslim civilization, proves to be the most fertile period in terms of religious literature --very similar to the situation in the 13th century, when the larger part of the Islamic Empire was devastated by the --Mongol hordes, and yet the greatest mystical poetry and theory was produced between Cairo and India: it is as though a strange balance of power produces such effects. Mir Dard would have seen here the constant interplay of the Divine manifestations of Wrath and Grace, which point, again, to The One; Shah Abdul Latif would have probably thought of the pearl which can be found in the very depths of the stormy, raving ocean, provided the oyster in patient.

References:

1. At-tahfhimat al-ilahiyya II 53, 145.
2. Id. II 19
3. Id. I p. 281 ff.
4. Id. II 35. The text is interesting enough to deserve quotation:
All those who go to Ajmer or to the tomb of Salar Mas'ud or similar places for something they want from there: that is a sin, greater than murder or adultery. Is he not like someone who worships handmade things, or like those who called Al-lat and al-Uzza? But I cannot declare them clearly as infidels because there is no text from the lawgiver in this peculiar case.
5. Id. I 28 - 34.
6. Cf. Y. Friedmann's article 'Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions', in: JAOS 95/2, 1975.
7. J. Parsram, 'Sindh and its Sufis', p. 78 F.
8. Id. p. 54.
9. Qani', *Maqalat ash-shu 'ara'*, ed. H. Rashdi, p. 841 f.
10. Parsram, 1. c. p. 75.
11. Id. p. 84.
12. About the 'complex religious history' of Sindh see H. T. Sorley, 'Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit', p. 166, and Yusuf Husain, 'L'inde Mystique', p. 15.
13. M. Jotwani has given as many biographical details as are available in his book, 'Shah Abdul Latif', New Delhi 1975.
14. Other chronograms in Qani', 1. c. p. 428 f.
15. R. Burton, 'Sindh and The Races That inhabit the Valley of the Indus', p. 75

Shah Latif

Kalyan B. Advani

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was born in 1102 A.H. (1690 A.D.) in the village of Hala Haveli in Hala Taluka in Hyderabad District. No vestige of this village is now visible except for the simple and solitary mosque, built on the site of the house of the Saint's birth by a Darvesh, named Laung, whose mortal remains now rest in Khairpur District. After the poet's birth, his father, Habib Shah, migrated from Haveli to Kotri, a village four miles from Bhit (the mound where the poet lived and prayed). The village now exists only in the form of stray ruins.

Shah was a Sayyid, descended from the family of the Holy Prophet. His ancestors hailed from Herat. An ancestor of his, Mir Hyder Shah, once chanced to come to Hala and there he married the daughter of one Shah Muhammad Halo.

Mir Haider had stayed in Hala for three years and eight months, when he received the news of his father's death and had therefore to repair for a time to his native place. Soon after his departure, his wife bore a son, who was named Mir Ali in accordance with the instructions left by him. Shah Abdul Karim, the great grandfather of the poet and himself a much revered mystic poet, was descended from Mir Ali. Shah's father Habib Allah Shah was the son of Sayyid Abdul Qudus Shah, son of Sayyid Jamal Shah, the third son of Shah Abdul Karim. Shah's mother was descended from Makhdoom Dayani, known as "Makhdoom Arabi". He was a "majzoob", i.e., 'one afflicted by divine lunacy.' His tomb till today stands in the east of Old Hala.

Tradition relates that Shah Abdul Latif was born by the benediction of a holy man, Hashim Shah of Matiyari and so named in accordance with his desire. In *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram*, Shah Habib, the poet's father is described as a 'perfect man of God', devoted to a life of piety and contemplation. At times, he used to be so completely lost in meditation as to be unconscious even of his beloved son's presence in his chamber. *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram* was written by Mir Ali Sher Qana' of Thatta, a disciple of Shah Abdul Latif, in 1181 A.H. (1767 A.D.), i.e., fifteen years after the Poet's departure from this world.

It is stated that Shah Habib sent his son for academic instruction to Akhund Noor Mohammad Bhatti of the village Vai, a village situated six miles from Bhit and four miles from Udero Lal. Shah, it is said, declined to learn anything beyond *Alif*, the first letter of the alphabet, and also the 'Allah', The Supreme One.

Learn the letter *Alif*, forsake all other learning;
Purify thy heart, how many pages shalt thou turn?

When Shah Habib learnt that his son had declined to learn anything beyond the first letter, *Alif*, he felt elated and warmly embraced his son. He, however, remarked: 'Verily, thou art on the path of Truth. This mystic truth is also known to me but worldly prudence dictates that one should not abhor secular education'. *Tuhfat-ul-Kiram*, however, records the Shah did not receive any school education.

There are two opinions as to whether the poet was *Ummi*, i.e., 'illiterate' or otherwise. The scholars, who regard him as 'the unique man of letters of his age', are, however, unable to produce any reliable or authentic evidence in support of their view. At best, theirs is an equivocal verdict. Dr Trumpp, the eminent European scholar, who was the first man to compile and publish the poet's *Risalo*, writes in the Introduction:

"It is said that he had never studied, which is however sufficiently refuted by his Diwan, where he exhibits a deep learning in Arabic and Persian."

Dr Gurbuxani writes in his 'Muqqadama-e-Latifi' (Introduction in Sindhi to *Shah jo Risalo*): "It can be stated with certainty that Abdul Latif, according to his times, was highly learned in every branch of knowledge-partly due to his academic pursuits and partly due to his personal observation and study. He was a scholar of Persian and Arabic and had a complete mastery over his mother tongue. Not only this, but he was also conversant, to some extent, with

some other languages such as Baluchi, Saraiki, Hindi, Punjabi, etc... He seems to have made a deep study of the Quran and Traditions, Theology and Philosophy, Sufism and Vedantism, Syntax and Grammar, etc. The Holy *Quran*, Rumi's *Mathnawi*, and Shah Karim's *Risalo* were always with him.... He has touched in his *Risalo* a variety of subjects originating from the study of these three books and also of the aforementioned branches of learning; at certain places he has given literal renderings of some of the verses of the *Quran* and Rumi's verses.... this bears indisputable testimony to the fact that Shah Abdul Latif was a unique scholar of his own time.... the 'true knowledge', however, which he imbibed, dawns only on a few rare souls. There is only one way of acquiring this knowledge-contemplation of the beauty and majesty of Man and Nature and reading the Book of Self. Undoubtedly, Shah had made this study and this is what accounts for his being the Sovereign of Poets."

Mirza Kalich Beg writes in his work in Sindhi-An Account of *Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai*: 'It is but certain that he received no instruction under any school teacher; perhaps what he learnt was by his own personal zeal. He was well versed in Persian and Arabic. There are several Quranic verses, Traditions and other Arabic sayings in his *Risalo*, which can be quoted with such elegant aptness by none except a man of deep learning. There is, however, nothing on record to testify that Shah had received any regular academic training. Had he learnt to scribe, a few remnants of his hand would have surely been on record. Shah possessed manuscripts of three books-the Holy *Quran*, Rumi's *Mathnawi* and the *Risalo* of Shah Karim of Bulri. Nothing is written in hand on the copies of these books-whether on their covers or in the margined space of their pages to exhibit any specimen of the hand of the poet. In all faith, we submit, that on Perfect Men, God bestows Divine knowledge, of which mortals know nothing.

Professor Jethmal Parsram in his *Life of Shah Bhitai* also expresses the belief that Shah had made a deep study of Arabic and Persian. He (Professor Jethmal) refers to the wealth of Persian and Arabic phraseology contained in the *Risalo*.

Dr. Sorley writes in his *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit*: 'How far Shah Abdul Latif was an educated man has proved a great puzzle to scholars. The popular tradition is that he had no regular education but taught himself everything. Popular tradition in this respect is, however, unreliable. His poems show clearly an acquaintance with Arabic and Persian far beyond the ordinary accomplishments of his

time. It is certain that he was familiar with the work of Jalaluddin Rumi... The mystical form of his poetry could never have been achieved without a deep and sympathetic understanding of the mystical development of Islam that came to India through the work of the great Persian poets. Thus, whatever the fact of Shah Abdul Latif's education may have been (and it is a typical conceit of special revelation), it is clear that his education was neither superficial nor contemptible.'

Mian Din Mohammed Wafai writes in his work in Sindhi, *Lutf-ul-Latif*: 'Such is the sublimity and grace of the poetry that none can believe that Shah Sahib was an illiterate man or an ordinary individual; but those who know that through self-purification and penance man gets knowledge of those mysteries of which common men are absolutely ignorant, will surely believe that God bestows upon some illiterate persons such treasures of knowledge as fill the minds of the wise and the learned with amazement.'

Sayyid Mir Ali Sher Qana' Thattawi, a disciple and contemporary of Shah, however, writes in Persian in *Maqalat-ul-Shuara*: 'Although the much revered Shah Sahib was illiterate, yet all the knowledge of the universe was inscribed on the hidden tablet of his heart.'

Some of the foregoing scholars have laid stress on Shah's knowledge of Persian and Arabic and, on that basis, they pronounce the verdict that Shah had acquired scholastic training. In order to establish the truth of the thesis that Shah was educated, scholars invariably argue thus: Had he been illiterate, he could never have retained with him a copy of Rumi's *Mathnawi*--- a golden-lettered and gold-edged attractive manuscript presented to him by Mian Noor Mohammed Kalhor, the ruler. Shah had a profound faith in Rumi, who is the only mystic poet of Persia quoted by him in his poetry. Sachal also was a disciple of Attar, the great Persain mystic poet of *Mantaq-ut-Tair* fame. Being an Awaisi, Shah probably had some pre-destined spiritual connection with Rumi (Awaisis receive spiritual grace from living as well as departed (Masters). It was, therefore, perhaps out of reverence for Rumi, that Shah had always with him a copy of the great Persian mystic's *Mathnawi*. Presumably Mian Noor Mohammed presented it to him in the light of his knowledge of the poet's faith in Rumi. Shah makes mention of no other poet in his *Risalo* except Rumi. He quotes him by way of authority in a string of half a dozen couplets, one of which may be cited here by way of illustration:

The Message of the Master

The whole diversity (creation) is His secker and He
the Fountain Source of Beauty-thus says Rumi.

The shaft of cupid did not spare even a man like Shah and when it pierced his heart, it rendered him a distracted wanderer in meadows and deserts like the ever-flying 'Huma' and the ever-roving musk-deer of Cathay. Like Majnun, he became a mad rover of the desert, singing pathetic songs of separation and indulging in lonely lamentations of love agony:

There was a wail in the desert as the note of a Koel.
This distraction and tumult were verily of Love.

Shah was twenty when the shaft of love pierced his soul. Temporal love purified his being and elevated him to the heights of divine mysticism. He says:

O Mother! Love has purified me as the carder purifies
cotton.

Mirza Moghul Beg, an aristocrat of the Royal Arghun family and a resident of Kotri, was a disciple of Shah Habib, the poet's father. Whenever a member of his family happened to fall ill, he used to entreat Shah Habib to sanctify his abode with a visit and confer the boon of health on the ailing member. The Mirzas observed strict *pardah* or veiled seclusion for their women. None but the Sayyids had the permission to cross the threshold of their Haveli (mansion). Once it so happened that Mirza Moghul's daughter fell ill and, as usual, Shah Habib was entreated to pay a visit to his disciple's house. Incidentally, Shah Habib himself was not well at the time and he therefore asked his illustrious son Shah Abdul Latif to represent him. The girl was carefully covered with a blanket; but her beauty, like the full moon, could not remain as a veiled mystery. At her sight, Shah was overwhelmed with a mysterious ecstasy and holding her finger in his hand, he said almost in a state of trance: 'One, whose finger is clasped by the Sayyid's hand, shall witness no harm.' Hearing this, Mirza Moghul and his relatives were all red with wrath but they exercised restraint and discretion and said nothing to the son of their Spiritual Preceptor. However, by underhand methods they made it so hot for the poor Sayyids that the latter had perforce to quit Kotri and settle down some distance away towards the north in a separate Haveli (colony).

In the frenzy of love, Shah now began to wander through

deserts and dales like Majnun. Once he was so overwhelmed by love's intoxication that he lost all consciousness and lay in that state at a place for three consecutive days. His body was wrapped with many a sandy fold, only an end of his skirt being slightly visible. By chance, a shepherd's eye fell on him and he conveyed the news to the pining Shah Sahib.

Hearing this, the poet's father flew to the spot, and addressing his son, said in an agonised tone:

Due to surging currents of wind, thy limbs lie buried
in dust.

At this cry of agony, Shah recovered from his state of unconsciousness and responded thus:

I am still breathing in order to have a glimpse of the Beloved.

Their reunion, however, proved transitory, for one day Shah suddenly disappeared from his home in a mysterious way, leaving his parents once again in separation and sorrow. It seems, the poet, since that day, enjoyed for long the association of *Sanyasis* and wandered with them through many a territory adjoining Sindh. His *Risalo* contains reference to Lakhpat and Girnar, Jessalmir and Thar, Ganja and Hero, Lahut and Lamakan, Kabul and Hinglaj, etc. He travelled in their company for three years and enriched his spiritual experience.

In the company of *Yogis*, he not only made a pilgrimage to Hinglaj but also had a darshan of Dwarka:

The naked ones (*Yogis*) went to Hinglaj;
The Shivites were sanctified by a visit to Dwarka.

The *Devi* of Hinglaj is called *Nani* by the Muslim custodians of the shrine of Hinglaj.

The *Risalo* shows that Shah went of Hinglaj via Ganja Hill in Hyderabad (Sindh). On Ganja Hill, he seems to have had some very revealing spiritual experiences; he regards it (Ganja) as the very fountain source of Divine grace:

Those who get acquainted with Ganja Hill:
Become *Yogis*, forsaking all books and scriptures.

He saw the *Yogis'* fire flickering at places where not a bird could set its foot.

The Message of the Master

Where not a bird's foot is perceptible, there flickers a
flame,
Who will light fire there except wandering hermits?

The *yogi's* path is hard and thorny Shah says:

Alas! I have not been able to learn *yoga*. *Yoga* befits *yogis* who
enshrine within them the mystery of all mysteries.

It seems that at one stage Shah had to suffer separation of a
Yogi friend. Either the friend had deliberately 'deserted' him or had
departed to the Eternal Abode. In this state of separation, Shah,
found himself in a wilderness and shed tears of blood over his sad
lot:

I find not today my *Yogi* friends in their abodes;
I have shed tears all the night, troubled by the pang of part-
ing;
The Holy Ones for whom my heart yearneth, have all
disappeared.
In their abodes, I find not today any new straws and stones;
Gone are they, leaving the ash to fly;
They have embarked on their journey, blowing all the way
their conch.

According to some scholars, the above verses of Shah are a de-
dication to the martyr saint Shah Inayat of *Jhok Sharif*, who suffered
martyrdom in 1133 A.H. (1720 A.D), when Shah himself was only
31.

The difficult travels that the poet undertook in the company of
his *Yogi* friends, not only helped him in unravelling the intricate
knots of the mind but also provided him with material for his love
stories. His tales-Sasui and Punhu, Momul and Rano, Suhni and
Mehtar, Nuri and Jam Tamachi, etc. all testify to his keen observa-
tion of scenes pertaining to Sindh and its surrounding territory.
While proceeding to Hinglaj, he commenced his journey from the
Ganja Hill at Hyderabad(Sindh). The sight of the Helaya Hill and the
Kinjhar Lake on the way inspired him to sing the glory of Nuri and
Tamachi-embodiments of love and humility. The lake is situated at
the bottom of the hill and on its sides there is a lovely forest
growth. Of this beautiful spot, Shah sings thus:

The water runs below, the blossoms above and the lovely
forests stand on the sides;

The fragrance of Tamachi saturates the atmosphere;
With the blowing of the North breeze, the Kinjhar becomes
a cradle.

The vestiges of the ruined royal palace are visible even today on
the Helaya Hill.

On his way to Karachi he saw Bhambhor, which reminded him
of Sasui and her sufferings:

I shall not live for a moment in this vast city of Bhamb-
hor,
I shall seek and pursue my Beloved amidst mountains,
O Friends!

Thereafter he seems to have visited Malir, known for its
hena.

I shall dye my limbs in *hena* in Malir.

From Malir he went to Karachi, where he saw 'The Whirlpool
of Kalachi', to the dangers of which he has alluded in *Sur Ghatu*:
There is deadly peril in Kalach; he who enters it knows no return.

After leaving Karachi, he first came to River Hab and thereafter
proceeded to the mountain Vindur and the rivulet of the same name;
thence to Haro mountain and finally to Hinglaj. On the banks of the
Hab, he saw the white-footed deer, known as *Rojh*.

While searching for her Beloved on the Hab, she (Sasui)
saw *Rojhes* at night.

Shah alludes to the perils of journey to the Vindur thus:

They may well gird up their loins, who journey to Vindur;
Why should others do so if they will not stand the test?

After the Vindur comes the 'Desert of *Guru* and *Chella*', so
called because once an ascetic and his disciple had perished in it for
want of water. Surely none else but Sasui would embark on a jour-
ney through such pitiless barren tract.

Sasui may well hail wilderness for the Beloved's sake.

The journey across the Haro also seems to be full of tribulation
and trials:

I know not how they (Punhu and his companions) crossed
the Haro range.

The Message of the Master

From Karachi to Hinglaj, it is an arduous, if not also a perilous journey of one hundred and twenty miles. Shah seems also to have visited the territory of Qalat as is evident from his account of 'Jau, Jamur and Jar'-mountain ranges on that side and also of 'Van-kar' in Las Bella.

Unscalable are the trees of Vankar, where exist Jau, Jamur and Jar.

After his pilgrimage of Sapar Sakhi, he seems to have returned to Karachi via Las Bella and thence to have visited Lahut:

The *Yogis* have set their foot in Lahut.

Sapar Sakhi has been one of the rulers of Las Bella; he has achieved immortality on account of his unbounded munificence. Once he bestowed upon an ill-voiced minstrel a gift of a hundred horses of choicest Arab breed. Shah has immortalised this episode and the ruler in his '*Sur Prabhati*':

Seek His favour as but an ignoramus;
'Sapar' last night has set apart Arab horses as a gift for thee;

The Bella ruler patronised one, who knew not even the rudiment of music.

During the course of his three years' wanderings in the company of *Yogis*, Shah accumulated vast spiritual treasures. Probably he was thereafter instructed by some ascetic to settle down at one place to contemplate divinity.

The Prince of the mountain Kingdom (Punhu) is not there,
where you fancy him to be;

Hark not to the rock, your very self is Vankar (His Abode);

Be away from aliens, inquire of the Beloved from Self.

Some scholars believe that Shah had to part with *Yogis* because of his unwillingness to perform some of their rites and ceremonies. The question then arises: 'Did the *Yogis* desert him or did he himself choose to bid good-bye to them?' Since it was not in Shah's nature to be on terms of disharmony with any one, one cannot imagine that he could ever have defied or openly disagreed with his hermit friends. In fact, he remained their most ardent admirer and adorer throughout his life.

On his way back from Hinglaj, he seems to have visited Moghulbhin, Lakhat, Hallar, Porbundar, Junagadh, Girnar and Khambhat. At Thatta (Sindh) he had discourses with a number of learned and pious men, including Makhdoom Mu'een also known as Makhdoom Tharo.

Sur Samundi, Sur Sri Raag, Sur Sorath and *Sur Khambhat* seem to be the fruit of his experiences during these travels. On his way back to his native soil, the poet seems to have visited Jessalmer and Thar. In *Sur Marui* we have a first-hand and authentic details of the flora and fauna of Thar and the life of its humble folk. It is probable that he also had the occasion to see Ludano Hill situated five miles from Jessalmer and the adjoining Kak stream, where Momal had built a magic palace that had baffled and brought to a sorry end many a princely suitor. It was finally Rano who successfully survived its magic horrors and won her hand.

On his way back to Thatta, Shah happened to hear a piteous wail coming from a cave. On his going there, he found that a man was reciting in a mournful voice the following verse:

All alone shall I now pursue my Beloved (Punhu).

On his being questioned by the poet as to the cause of the woe-ful lament, the man told him that he was by profession a camel-driver (Jat) and that while passing by Bhit (Shah's abode) he had heard the verse from some *faqirs* (Shah's disciples). Said the saint-poet to him: 'If you so desire, I shall recite to you the remaining two verses. The camel-driver's face glowed with joy as Shah recited to him the second verse:

On the way are difficult mountain passes, the very cages
of death.

On hearing the second verse, the camel-driver fell almost into a trance and entreated the poet to complete the couplet. Shah then recited the final verse:

If the Beloved's yearning is with me, I covet no other
company.

No sooner did the poet utter the last syllable of the couplet than the camel-driver breathed his last. Shah's sorrow and amazement knew no bounds. Dr Gurbuxani writes in his above quoted Introduction: 'Then he buried him there and till today his grave is seen by those who chance to pass that way. Ever afterwards Shah used to say

that a more sincere and a more profound lover than the camel-driver he had nowhere accosted in his life'.

Shah Habib, the poet's father, was on account of his son's long absence, pining away in grief. He prayed to the Lord night and day for the safe return of his beloved son Abdul Latif. In this connection he also made daily supplications at the shrine of Makhdoom Nu'h. One day, all of a sudden, Shah quietly entered his parental abode. Once again Yaqoob (Jacob) got back his lost Yousuf (Joseph) and the long period of painful separation terminated in a moment of immeasurable joy.

Soon after his return, he was wedded to the fair one, for whose sake he had for years wandered in hills and deserts, dales and mountains like Majnun-she was Bibi Sayedah Begum, the daughter of Mirza Moghul Beg and later reverently called by Shah's disciples *Taj-ul-Mukhadarat* (The Glory of the veiled ones).

It was something of a miraculous nature that brought about this marriage. Once it so happened that some robbers of the 'Dal' tribe, taking advantage of the absence of the male members, broke into the house of Mirza Moghul Beg and decamped with all their valuables. Sometime later, the Moghuls, along with their attendants, followed the robbers' track. On the way they happened to pass by Shah's house. Apprised of this Shah volunteered his and his people's services; the offer, however, was contemptuously rejected. Shah felt very much grieved at this.

The Mirza was assassinated by the daocits. This occurred in 1124 A.H. (1713 A.D.). The women folk of the Moghuls apologised to the Sayyids. Mirza Moghul Beg's daughter was married to Shah. She was a pious and virtuous lady. She brought with her, her brother Golo, who did not survive for long. Shah left no issue. There was a conception but it was fruitless. It is said that Shah once saw from a distance one of his disciples running at top speed towards Bhit. He was almost breathless by the time he reached Bhit. He had brought a Pala fish from long distance because the Bibi Sahibeh had expressed a desire to have it. On learning this, the Saint remarked: 'If the child yet unborn can make things so hard for my men, how much more trouble will it create when born? It is therefore better if there be no child at all.' Thereupon the child remained still-born. Shah always used to say that his children were his followers-their hearts like his were wounded with love.

The tenor of Shah's life now was smooth. He passed his days in prayer, in singing his poetic songs and in studying and admiring the

beauty and grandeur of nature. The lovely natural scenes often filled his mind with ecstatic fervour, which resulted in poetry of the most glorious and divine character. He was always absorbed in deep contemplation, trying to study and understand the great mystery that is life and its relationship with divinity and universe.

Shah's genial disposition and his piety attracted many souls to him. He was a Sayyid and also a man of ideal character and as such he commanded reverence bordering on worship. Shah himself was against this idolisation as is evident from the following verse:

O Yogi! adhere to yoga and keep away from Self-worship;
Human discipleship is a cankerous disease, O glorious one!

But the people were spontaneously attracted towards him as iron is drawn to the magnet. The Pirs and Mirs (religious hierarchy and aristocracy) could not tolerate this. Of his antagonists, Dr Gurbuxani writes:

'Among them were the descendants of Pir Makhdoom Nu'h, of whom Pir Panj Pag was then the occupant of *Gadi or Masnad*; then there were Ajnani Sayyids of Matiari, Shah's own relatives. They could not relish the very idea that this man should be a Pir (spiritual preceptor) and have such a large following. Again there was Noor Muhammad Kalhoro (1718-55), the ruler of the time and leader of the Kalhoras. The Kalhoras in those days were at the very pinnacle of their power and commanded both terrestrial and spiritual leadership.'

It is now contended that Dr. Gurbuxani's reference to Pir Panj Pag is not correct.

All this jealousy and rivalry arose because of Shah's large following. Shah himself was averse to this but those whose vision was blurred could not see things clearly. All his adversaries vied with one another to trouble and pester him. Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro, the ruler, did his best to wipe him out of existence. None, however, by God's grace could do him any harm.

Those who are true servants of the Lord can be harmed
by no tempestuous tide.

With a view to having Shah Karim's mausoleum built, Shah embarked on a journey to Multan, then well-known for flowery tiles. When, on this return, he reached Khudabad, throngs of people

came to pay homage to him. Mian Noor Muhammad Kalhoro sent him a casket, containing a kind of costly confection. On receiving it, Shah cast it into the river, saying, 'Let the entire creation, have the benefit of this rare and rich nourishment'. The confection was saturated with a deadly poison. On another occasion, the ruler invited him to his palace and, before parting with him, presented to him an impetuous mare of rare breed. Flinging aside the bridle, Shah spurred the animal to top speed and in an instant vanished from the people's view. After sometime, however, he returned to the spot quite safe and sound. Mian Noor Muhammad repented of his treacherous act with all his heart and immediately bowed to him in reverence and became his disciple. It is said that Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, the illustrious son of Noor Muhammad, was born as a result of Shah's blessings. Thus was Mian Noor Muhammad, his erstwhile enemy, rewarded by him with an illustrious son.

Shah could now no longer suffer to stay at Kotri because of his deep love of undisturbed solitude. During the course of his wanderings, he had sighted a mound of sand, shrouded in thorny bushes, near Kirar Lake, four miles from New Hala. In his view that was an ideal spot for meditative and contemplative purposes. With strenuous labour, he and a few followers of his transformed it into 'Bhit', the immortal spot, where the poet lived, prayed and now lies buried. He, along with some of his followers, plastered the sand mound with a coating of the famous Sind clay and built there a humble cottage for himself. He also built there a small 'Haveli' (abode) for his parents and assigned various portions to the *faqirs*. He also built a small mosque there. During rainy season, 'Bhit' and its surroundings used to wear a beautiful garb of colour and perfume. In *Sur Sarang*, the poet makes an inspiring reference to it:

With tender affection, the flowers have poured on Bhit;
The lightning shafts shine verily like violets;
The pastures are now perfumed and luxuriously covered;
Sarang (Rain) has filled Kirar Lake to overflowing
and florally decked the plains.

It is said that poet's great grandfather Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri had once passed by that site (Bhit) and offered prayers there. He is said to have made this prediction: 'One of our descendants, who will be an illustrious saint, will make his abode here.' According to Dr Gurbuxani, Shah Karim was at that time on his way to Hala to meet his beloved friend Makhdoom Nu'h.

While Shah was still engaged in renovating Bhit, he received the news of his father's serious illness. Shah Habib (his father) sent him this message through a personal messenger:

What attachment has distracted thee from me?
My beloved one ! while I yet live, do, what thou shalt do
after I depart.

Shah's heart was deeply moved and he sent back the following message through the same messenger:

Grieve not, for I am not far away;
Physically away, yet really I am one with your noble self.

Shah Habib felt very much consoled on receiving the message and soon thereafter expired peacefully. Unfortunately, Shah arrived too late to bid farewell to him.

Shah was deeply grieved at his father's death and remained in mourning for many a day. Shah Habib died in 1155 A.H.=1742 A.D. This date can be determined from the Arabic chronogram inscribed by Muhammad Sadiq Naqshbandi:

Death is a bridge, crossing which a friend meets a friend.

Shah survived only for a decade after his father's death. After Shah Habib's departure from this world, the entire family shifted from Kotri to Bhit. Shah's reputation as a man of God now began to spread far and wide; people now began to perform frequent pilgrimages to Bhit to pay homage to their beloved saint.

He (Sama) perfumed the entire realm with his fragrance.

Sama music of the mystic type rendered, among others by such eminent musician as Atal and Chanchal, was Shah's spiritual pastime. Music was his life and soul. He himself had an expert knowledge of and a rare genius for music. Occasionally, he used to sing his own poetry. The *Vai* or *Kafi* that comes after the first *Dastan* of *Sur Suhni* used to be constantly on his lips during the last days of his life. Thus begins the touching song:

By what account, shall I live without my Beloved?

Towards the close of his life, the poet's heart yearned for a pilgrimage to Karbala. When he had but covered a little way from Wango Willasio, he was greeted by a pious man, who humbly submitted:

'O Revered One! you have always been telling people that Bhit will be your burial place; it is therefore suprising that you have chosen to embark on such a long journey towards the close of your journey on Earth!'

Deeply touched by the words, Shah abandoned the idea of proceeding further and immediately retraced his steps to Bhit. Arriving there, he donned black garments and sang *Sur Kedar* in lamentation of the Imams. He confined himself to solitude for a period of twenty days, during which he took only a few morsels of food. When he came out of his solitary chamber, he bathed, and then, throwing over himself a sheet, he sat in divine contemplation. Prior to this, he made a gesture, signifying that song and music be started. For three consecutive days, his Faqirs engaged themselves in song and music. When they stopped they discovered that Shah's soul had, without anyone's knowledge, flown to the Abode of Eternal Bliss. He left this earthly planet on the 14th of Safar in 1165 A.H.=1752 A.D. His life's journey ended when he was 63-the same age at which the Holy Prophet and Hazarat Ali ascended to the Realm of Eternal Light. He was succeded by his nephew's son, Sayyid Jamal Shah, who had treated him with utmost affection and reverence during his brief stay in Wango Willasio (Kutch).

Shah's earthly remains, according to his own will, were laid at rest on Bhit at the feet of Shah Habib. Mian Ghulam Shah Kalhoru built a splendid tomb over his grave. The exquisite work was executed by Idan, the famous artisan of the period and was completed in 1167 A.H.=1754 A.D. During the days of Mirs supremacy, repairs of the saint's tomb and the mosque were undertaken on a grand scale by Mir Nasir Khan. His cousin, Mir Muhammad Khan, was responsible for providing the tomb with a beautiful silver door which, in its majestic solidity, stands as new as ever to this day. Several beautiful Persian couplets, indicating the date of Shah's death, are inscribed on the walls. Two of them, composed by Muhammad Panah, are very striking. Shah's tomb is now a place of pilgrimage for the high and the low, and to those who go there it offers much spiritual solace and comfort.

Those, who wake all night, to recite His Glorious Name;
Make their dust, says Abdul Latif, ever precious and
honoured;
Millions come to bend their heads to them.

Every Friday night *faqirs* sing the choicest verses from the

saint's poetry. The singing starts to the accompaniment of musical instruments at 10 p.m. and terminates at sunrise.

Shah never uttered his poetic words but in a state of trance; his poetry was recorded immediately by his disciples. There is an erroneous belief in the minds of certain people that Shah had, prior to his death, consigned his *Risalo* to Kirar Lake, because he feared that the people would misunderstand and misinterpret his words and fall into error. There is a further belief that, at this, a wave of grief overwhelmed his followers; and Shah, out of compassion, requested Mai Naimat (a lady by name Naimat) to dictate it to them. It is so believed that this lady had committed most of the poetry of Shah to her memory; and that the new *Risalo*, so prepared, was named "Ganj" and left in the custody of Tamar Faqir, whose descendants continue to guard it this day.

It is inconceivable that a mystic poet would destroy with his hand his own God-inspired utterances. Dr Gurbuxani puts it beautifully and aptly: 'A true poet ever sings Truth and Truth can neither die nor can it be annihilated.' Shah himself has referred to his verses as 'Sacred Utterances'-What is sacred can never perish. Whether the popular belief is valid or otherwise, the truth enshrined in his poetry remains with us and shall never die,

The Man and his Way of Life

There is no genuine portrait of Shah available anywhere but the pen-picture depicted by Dr Gurbuxani seems to be very near the truth. He writes in his 'Muqqadama-e-Latifi' (Introduction to the *Risalo*): 'It is said that Shah was not very tall but just above the medium stature. His shoulders were broad and he was neither very flabby nor very lean. His physical strength was good and all his life remained healthy. In his youth, he had dark hair and a round and handsome beard. His skin was of wheat colour, slightly tending towards fairness. He had a broad forehead and black attractive eyes, which often shone like torch lights. His face was gloriously bright and in his old age particularly it reflected remarkable effulgence.'

Benevolence was largely writ on Shah's effulgent forehead and his eyes were always wet with the mist of divine tenderness. His poetry is a mirror of his character. He was the very embodiment of those qualities which he has commended in his poetry. His life's principle was to maintain humility and patience under all circumstances and to 'mould the mind like wax' and behave accordingly with all men. He saw in dust what he discovered nowhere in the entire universe.

What in dust is, in nothing else is.

He discovered Eternal Life in self-annihilation.

Shah Sahib lived on simple and frugal diet and attired himself in a simple manner. He did not believe in self-decoration.

Those who are divinely intoxicated love no attire;

The *Lahutis* (*Yogis*), says Latif, are always poorly clad.

Shah used to wear a long yogic garment, stitched with black thread. His head dress was a white *Kulah*' (cap worn by *Dervishes*), wrapped all round with a piece of black cloth. He used to take the yogic staff (*bera'gin*) in his hand. He used to eat and drink in a *Kish-ata* or *Kishkol* (a boat-like bowl used by *faqirs*). All these things have been preserved till this day at Bhit with devotional care and reverence. He often walked barefooted and only rarely used any footwear. He used to sleep on a wooden bedstead (called *sandal*), his bed being but an old and patched quilt. He slept but meagrely and lived, a most austere life.

He was absolutely selfless and incurred no one's obligation. He

never even asked any of his men to give him water, because that too, according to him, was like seeking somebody's favour.

It is said that a disciple of his used to come once annually to Bhit to pay homage to him. Every year he used to bring with him a humble woollen coverlet as a devotee's gift for the saint. Once it so happened that owing to poverty he was unable to purchase the usual gift for his *Murshid* and consequently abstained from his customary annual pilgrimage to Bhit. When next year he appeared before him, the Saint eagerly inquired: 'Why did you deprive me of the privilege of seeing you last year?' The poor man replied, 'Last year I could not afford to purchase a blanket for your sacred self; hence I felt ashamed to touch your feet empty-handed.' Thereupon Shah said, "A blanket that separates a friend from a friend is of no worth or value."

Shah was a very tender-hearted man. He had compassion and affection for all creatures-men, beasts, birds and insects. He hurt no creature in his life. He reminds huntsmen of the Great Hunter-Death-in order that they might desist from killing dumb creatures.

You yourself will be hunted by the Great Hunter- and you
have engaged yourself in hunting!

His heart literally melted whenever he saw poor cranes in the hunter's snare. The poor cranes used to cry pitifully, not because they found themselves in prison but because the thought of their young ones woefully oppressed them:

The cranes are wailing, they are about to depart;
They have left their young ones behind-they lament on
that account.

The piteous cries of the cranes literally cut his heart:

The crane's wail yesterday reminded me of my Beloved;
Without whom I am passing painful days here.

He was so soft-hearted that he nursed and brought up with his own hands two forlorn pups. One was called *Moti* and the other *Dhebhui*.

Shah was in love with music; he breathed his last in a state of trance while listening to music. In the strings of the harp he heard the tune divine:

It is not the harp that sings, it is the very mystery of the
soul that sings.

The Message of the Master

In *Sur Sorath*, he sings of the divine glory of music and of the immortality of the 'Song of Spirit'.

Shah's was a commanding personality and none dared ever to show flippancy in his presence. There was always a quiet and impressive dignity about his demeanour. Occasionally, however, he used to regale himself with a few jokes at the expense of Wagand or Waru Faqir, whom he has immortalised in his *Sur Bilawal*. In this *Sur*, he has used (out of affection of course), several humorous but uncomplimentary epithets in respect of this lame and untidy Faqir: viz. 'filthy', 'infernal fellow', 'sluggish creature', etc. This Faqir was an inhabitant of Kotri. It seems he was given to gluttony and had not even once in his life been a 'Knight of cleanliness'. Obviously, this inspired Shah to make some humorous remarks about Wagand in *Sur Bilawal*:

Once again Wagand, the sluggish fellow, has arrived from *Kotri*;
Give him a taste of the rough stick of leafless Caperbush (*Kirir*)

Once again Wagand, the Internal creature, has come;
The paradise (rosy company) of Sayyid renders even filthy
ones rosy;

Associate with perfume, so that thou shouldst become fragrant.

Among Shah's chosen band of faqirs the distinguished ones were: Tamar Faqir, his chief *Khalifa*, whose descendants continue to this day to be *Mujawirs* of the Saint's shrine; Mahmud Shah, who had renounced worldly riches to become a faqir for him Shah entertained so much regard that he willed that he should be buried by his feet; Shah Inat, a big land lord; Mian Hashim Alawi Rehan Poto, a singer and one of Shah's amanuenses; and finally Balal, whom Shah loved so much that he sometimes used to visit his (Balal's) village to have the pleasure of his company.

Sindh was blessed with a number of mystic saints during Shah's days and Shah himself used to visit them from time to time. As a young man, he had the privilege of meeting Shah Inayat, the great martyr saint of Sind. It is said that, on seeing him, Shah Inayat recited the following verse:

Slacken not thy pace, when confronted with difficult mountain passes;
It is only materialistic beings, that retreat, shaken by the arduous journey;
Go forth and garland the Beloved with flowers of Truth;

The Sweet Ones, says Inayat, will soon be by your side.

To this Shah replied:

O maid! slacken not thy pace in the face of difficult mountain ranges;

Pursue and seek the Loved One in the precipitous rocks;

O Sasui! be vigilant before thou seekest Fire of Love;

Despair not of the loving tenderness of thy Worthy Lord;

He who is nearer to thee than thy very eyes, cannot be said to be far from thee.

Shah had also gone to see Khwaja Muhammad Zaman of Lawari (Badin District) personally at the latter's place, although the Lawari Saint was much younger to him in years. Shah was so much impressed by Khwaja Sahib's spiritual greatness that he always used to recite the following couplet whenever there was mention of the Lawari saint in his presence:

I have seen, O Mother! those that have seen the Beloved;

I have no words to sing their glory.

Shah Sahib also used to go to Thatta frequently to see Makhoom Mu'een, one of the renowned saints of his time. In fact, it was at Shah's request, that the Makhdoom wrote *Awaisiya*, a tract in connection with the Awaisi path. Shah himself was an Awaisi *faqir*. An Awaisi is he who may or may not have a Spiritual Preceptor (*Murshid*). He owes his spiritual awakening directly to God. No one knows who Shah's *Murshid* was-perhaps it was entirely through his own ascetic exertions that he attained self-realisation.

It is mentioned in the *Tuhfa-tul-Kiram* that on the eve of Makhdoom Sahib's departure from this world, Shah one day said to his *faqirs*, 'Let us go to have last glimpse of our beloved friends.' On arriving there, the *faqirs* started *Sama'a* (Mystic music), which so intensely touched the heart of the Thatta Dervesh that he immediately repaired to his inner apartment in a state of trance; and soon thereafter 'the bird of his soul flew to its Celestial Abode.'

Shah also had occasion to meet Mian Sahibdina, Sachal's grandfather, when the latter was hiding himself in a grove of mustard trees to keep himself away from the public eye. On seeing him, Shah said, 'Let not the Beloved be kept behind a Veil; let Him be brought out for universal view.' Thereupon, the hiding *Dervesh* came out of the grove. When next time Shah went to Daraza, he re-

marked, on seeing the child Sachal, 'The vessel that we have placed on fire will be uncovered by him.'

Makhdoom Din Muhammad of Sehwan is also reported to have been an intimate friend of Shah. Shah went to Sehwan a number of times to see his friend and they between themselves even once exchanged their turbans as a mark of their inviolable friendship and unshakeable love. Madan, a Hindu sufi, was another intimate friend of Shah Sahib. He also belonged to Kotri and Shah greatly adored his company.

A new event has lately come to light. When Shah was thirty, he went to Bukera Village to have the privilege of seeing Qaim-ud-Din Qalandar, a mystic of exalted glory. He walked for two days to reach the village. He saw the saint of Bukera seated on a broken cot. He was greeted and treated by him with the utmost tenderness and cordiality. Said he to Shah, 'I can foresee a great spiritual future for you. Now stay here until the Holy Ramzan is over.' Shah obeyed and remained in his company for the entire month of Ramzan. He became a true *Awaisi* by virtue of his association with this perfect man of God.

Whatever the mystic path pursued by him, it is manifest from his poetry that he was above all restrictions of caste, colour and creed. Shah was neither a Sunni nor a Shia. When once questioned as to whether he was a Shia or a Sunni, he replied, 'I am between the two.' When it was submitted to him that between Shias and Sunnis there was nothing, he replied, 'I am also nothing.'

If thou seekest the Beloved, discard all piety (religious consciousness);

Those who have seen the Beloved have abandoned all religions.

Although he was a sufi mystic in the real sense, he used to perform all religious duties faithfully, thereby serving as a model for his people.

As a perfect Guide, he defines the true path thus:
Understand thy religion and then pursue the spiritual path;
Tune thy heart to Truth enjoy the Abode of Realisation;
Remain firm on the Path and thus thou shalt be saved from all impurity.

It is evident from *Sur Ramkali* that Shah had been blessed with the association of a perfect *Yogi* or a man of God, with whom he

had some predestined connection. He seems to have acquired 'grace' from him. He acknowledges this in unmistakably clear terms:

In this life we enjoyed a rare boon-the company of a *Yogi*,
The one, with whom we had a spiritual tie, revealed him-
self to us.

He also records: The hermit cloak bestowed on me by my Guru is for me a priceless treasure. To every disciple or aspirant, he tenders this valuable advice: 'If thou wearest the garment given to thee by thy Guru in a spirit of self-annihilation, thou shalt truly attain thy destined goal':

The cloak given to me by my Guru is the richest boon for
me;

O aspirant! Wear it with reverence, sitting in yogic posture.

The cloak given to me by my Guru, is an ornament for
me;

This shall take thee to thy goal, if thou wearest it with
reverence.

Under the influence of *Yogis*, all sense of 'duality' vanished from his mind and his heart became free from all manner of rigid thinking and religious bigotry:

They are concerned neither with irreligion nor with religion
(Islam);

They plead only thus: 'Make the Beloved your own'.

Language, Technique and Treatment
of Native Material

Shah, both as a man and as a poet, was a great patriot. He was no doubt a lover of humanity and his love knew no geographical frontiers. He was, however, an ardent worshipper of the soil of his birth-Sindh. His *Risalo* furnishes ample testimony to this-his very mysticism is interwoven with patriotic love and lore.

In an era, when Arabic and Persian commanded a position of supremacy, in the world of letters, it was Shah who showed the wealth, vitality and poetic vigour of his mother tongue-Sindhi. The rich vocabulary of the *Risalo* is indeed a source of sheer wonder and a treasure of deep learning to scholars and literary men. It is true that his poetry embodies many words of Persian and Arabic stock but they serve as an ornamentation of an unobtrusive and happy nature. His language is very close to Prakrit-in fact it solves our present day controversial tangle in respect of language-it strikes a happy and harmonious balance between Sanskritical vocabulary on the one hand and Persian and Arabic phraseology on the other. An exhaustive list of words could be furnished in support of this thesis.

The most striking feature of Shah's poetry is this that both in technique and content, it is free from the tyranny of Persian models. He did not adopt Persian prosody for his poetic expression but he chose for it the *Doha*, the favourite model of saint poets of South Asia. Thus he freed himself from a foreign and conventional technique. In his hands, the *Doha* became a thing of matchless glory and superb charm; he introduced into it varieties that gave it an attractive garb of its own. Here also he did not allow himself to be shackled by the rules of prescribed *matras* or syllables and the rule of two lines. The *matras* or syllables of his couplets present a variety that lends an unrivalled sweetness and charm to his poetry. He did not confine himself to the rule of two lines but liberally widened its scope, in one verse embodying as many as eleven lines.

Shah's poetry is not only meant to be recited but also sung. The titles of some of his 'Surs' are based and conditioned by their import. Their subject matter is essentially of Sindhi character, the rest of the Surs are given titles according to the classical system of Indian music.

In his days, Shah was called 'Hafiz of Sindh', not because his poetry has any affinity with that of the great Persian poet, but because his *Risalo* was as precious to his people as *Dewan-e-Hafiz* is to the Persians. Both were God-inspired poets. Shah infused into the Doha what Hafiz infused into the *Ghazal*-a burning intensity of feeling and poetic flight of rare excellence. Shah, however, loved Sindhi so much that he has not inserted any Persian quotation in any of his verses except in one in *Sur Suhni*. It is a singular hem-stitch, not of any Persian poet but of the great mystic saint of Sindh-Shah Inayat Shah of Jhok Sharif.

If my head be laid at the feet of the Beloved what does it matter!

Shah, however, has occasionally quoted verses from the Holy *Quran* and also *Traditions* but he has made their spiritual significance quite clear and explicit by his unique manner of poetic elucidation.

Shah's similes are drawn from the common and humble objects of his beloved province and embody a symbolic significance easily comprehended by his people. A few instances may be given here by way of illustration:

'The Ocean whirls as doth *curd in a pot*.'
'Sorrows have ascended to the top like *white ants*.'
'Like *creepers*, sorrows have entangled my heart.'
'She (Suhni) saw across the stream the hermit fire of her Beloved Mehar like an *earthen lamp*.'
'He (Tamachi) scattered pearls in the fishermen's abode like *Shells* and fish flakes.'
'As a *blade of grass* shrieks when cut,
So doth my heart bewail in separation of the Beloved.'
'As ring within ring doth the *hammersmith* mould,
So hath my Beloved entangled my heart.'
'As *shrubs* grow on plains in rainy season;
So spring sorrows in my heart at the Beloved's separation.'
'They will sift sorrows from my body as *chaff from grain*.'
'My eyes rain like *April clouds* but make no cloudiness.'
'The hermit of the sunny hue emerged like the *moth*.'
As the oyster sighs for clouds, so doth my (Marui's) heart
pant for Malir (her native place).'
'As salt to water, so my heart to love.'

The Message of the Master

'Like the *neem* twig, they uprooted my heart'.

While illustrating his philosophy, Shah does not cite the names of any mystics of Persia and Arabia as other poets have done-except those of Rumi and Mansoor and that also only for a couple of times. He is in love with Indian *Yogis*. His love-mysticism is also confined to the folklore of Sindh. His poetry is free from any allusions to such romantic legends as those of Laila and Majnun, Shireen and Farhad, so popular in the East-with poets as well as common men. His 'Surs' centre round the heroines, not heroes. Shah's heroines are what Majnun and Farhad are in the Persian works-a happy new departure from the common track.

Poets all over the world have given expression to patriotic feelings in glowing and glorious words. Shah's *Sur Marui* embodies some of the noblest verses of this class. For him, even the dust of one's native land is more precious than the world's richest musk and to be buried in one's native soil is to achieve life immortal.

In his poetry, the spiritual guide plays the roles of the blacksmith, the butcher, the archer, the fisherman, the washerman, the dyer, etc., in turn, as the process of purification dictates. It is the function of a blacksmith to cast rusted iron into fire and then water it and beat it with an hammer to harden it into shining and lustrous steel. Even so, the spiritual guide puts the aspirant to fiery ordeals and finally changes him into a shining spiritual hero:

Inquire of the hammersmith's hut only by making your
head the anvil.

The Beloved draws the lover by a bait even as the fisherman draws a fish from water; the former's bait, however, is threadless and invisible but nonetheless irremovable.

The Beloved, having struck the bait in my throat,
Declines ever afterwards to withdraw the same.

For Shah, the humble cattle-grazers of Thar, i.e. Marui's relatives are 'saintly souls', living in 'the all bright Malir'-'the Heavenly City, where their spiritual Highnesses dwell.'

Shah's *Sur Kapaiti* is based on the symbolism of the spinner and the spinning wheel-man being the spinner and his heart the spinning wheel. Repetition of the Lord's Name is the thread spun.

Shah does not ignore Sindh's lucrative professions in his search of illustrations- Sindh jewellers and bankers had distinguished them-

selves in foreign lands in those days. Thus spiritual Masters are 'Bankers', who know true gold from false; 'Jewellers' who through their lenses, can distinguish genuine diamonds from false ones; 'Lapidaries', who cut to shape precious gems and rubies; 'Merchants', who sail on high seas to gather gold from 'Lanka' (Ceylon). Alas, the true 'bankers,' 'lapidaries' and 'jewellers' are no more in this world; and in their places we find charlatans enthroned. Shah laments thus:

Since bankers are gone, disappear thou also O Gold!
Thy value none else can judge; thou shalt be mingled with
ore,
Those lapidaries are gone, who valued rubies and gems;
In their place the blacksmiths are now seen hammering
rusted iron.

The camel and the boat act as a 'great stimulant of thought' for Shah. The human mind is compared by him with the camel, who turns to unpalatable and ugly shrubs even when it is fed on roses and decorated with silver and gold. But the camel in Sindh as elsewhere has this virtue also that it can travel long and tedious distances with a huge burden on it ungrudgingly in hunger and thirst, in heat and cold. The human mind, if trained properly, will also conduct itself in a similar manner on the spiritual path.

I tied it to the bush to provide for it a feast of rose buds,
The evil-natured camel feeds secretly on sour grass;
Its ways, O Mother! have baffled me.

In *Sur Sri Raag*, Shah refers to the human body as a boat with multifarious holes in its bottom, tossed on tempestuous waves and harassed by violent and adverse winds. The 'True Captains' sound repeated notes of warning but rarely are they heeded by the careless Boatman. The great poet admonishes us thus:

Keep not vigilance out of thy mind whilst thou art on the
ocean;
O mariner! perhaps thou lovest sleep only to court disaster!
Keep awake on the sea and negotiate thy boat safely to the
shore!

Sindh, in a way, is 'a paradise of birds'-the nightingale, the parrot, the peacock, the falcon, the duck, the crane, the Indian cuckoo, the coot, the partridge, the koel, the crow, the heron, the stork, the

goose, the kite, the vulture, the sparrow, the pigeon, the jay and other domestic, desert and mountain fowls of endless variety. Their characteristics have been studied and cited metaphorically by Shah for moral, illustrative and spiritual purposes.

Thus, Sasui is depicted by Shah as hopping over trees like the peacock in search of Punhu, dressed as she was in a colourful and graceful garb. Her voice is as sweet and melodious as that of a parrot or koel or a crane.

In Sindhi poetry, the crow is hailed as the messenger of the Beloved and many tempting offers are made to it by our poets to induce it to bring to them the happy news of a prospective union with the Beloved or to convey him the lover's salutation and entreaties.

The 'Hans' or 'Swan', as found in Sanskrit poetry, is rather poetical than real. It is also represented as the vehicle of Brahman, nay, sometimes Brahma Himself. The word also is applied to an ascetic of a particular order. In *Sur Karayal* of Shah, the *Hans* or *Hanj*, as it is called in Sindhi, represents 'Man of God, or 'Man of Realisation.' The sea-gull and the crow represent ordinary men of the world, governed by gross thinking. The swan does not dwell in the midst of gulls or crows. It soars high in heaven and finds for itself a fountain of pure, limpid and serene water on some lofty mountain top. It dives deep and picks precious pebbles from the bottom. Yes, it soars high and dives deep—the distinguishing mark of a man of spirit. The crows and gulls sit on the bank of a dirty pond, looking for fish or carrion, even as men of the world look for things material, knowing not how to soar or dive. The world is a dirty pond, infested by gulls and crow. This is the symbolism propounded by Shah in *Sur Karayal*.

Darting away from the cranes, the swan soared high,
And discovered the spot, where dwells his Beloved.
His eyes are cast into the fathomless deep;
He hankers after the pearls, that lie in the bottom.

The world today is vitiated by hypocrites and charlatans, even as the limpid water of a stream or lake is polluted by dirty cranes and crows. Men of God, therefore, no longer wish to dwell in the vicious atmosphere of this false and wicked world.

The pure water has been polluted by crows,
The swans are ashamed of repairing there.

Then the final admonition:

If you dwell but once with the virtuous swans,
You will never again mingle with cranes.

'Karaya' is a synonym of the peacock. The 'peacock' in this *Sur* stands for the spiritual guide or perfect master. 'The Peacock has its own knack for killing snakes, especially the cobra. The human mind is also venomous like the cobra and none can conquer it unless he has the support of a powerful spiritual guide. Alas, men of good are rare in these days, as says the Poet:

I looked eagerly and in vain for a peacock in Kinjhar Lake,
The swans, whom I adore, have all flown away.

Shah confines himself to the birds and animals of his own beloved province of Sindh. *Taro* (the desert cuckoo) thirsts for rain as the lover does for the beloved. *Babio* is a desert bird that dies when it is lashed by the hot wind blowing across the desert.

May I die like Babio by a blast of the hot wind,
If ever I should forget my Beloved.

The poet illustrates the union of two souls, placed in different situations, by the example of the Bee and the Lotus. It is in this very *Sur* that he cites this illustration:

The Lotus hath its roots in the earth, the Bee flies above;
Their romance is a clue to perfect love;
They drink from the cup of love;
But they can never slake their thirst of love.

Again, the Bird and the Huntsman, remind him of the human heart and Satan:

That which is Bird, is also the Cage;
That which is Lake, is also the Swan;
The Huntsman dwells too within the Cage;
And has made miserable the life of the Swan.

Shah's *Sur Dahar* is a pathetic tribute to the melody, sacrifice and tender love of cranes. They fly in flocks from their mountainous abode in search of food, leaving their young ones behind:

They move in a flock, united in the bond of inviolable
love,
Behold! birds have more affection than men!

The Message of the Master

They assemble near a lake or a spring, and sing songs of tender affection. Alas! the dirty hunter all of a sudden emerges from his ambush and destroy the joy of loving hearts. As he takes some of them in his bag, they whine and wail for their young ones. The poet, whose heart is already cut on account of separation, feels a deeper cut when he sees a crane in this wretched state:

Yesterday, the crane, by its whines, reminded me of my
Beloved,
Without whom I am passing an empty life here.

Marui, the desert girl, who had been forcibly carried away by King Umar from the village well and confined by him to his palace at Umarkot on her refusal to marry him, says in *Sur Marui*:

As cranes pine for the rock,
And oysters for the ocean,
Even so do I thirst every moment
For my beloved and sweet home.

In *Sur Yaman Kalyan*, Shah sings of the eternal love of the moth for the candle or flame and invites all lovers to the Feast of Fire:

If thou callest thyself a lover, retreat not at the sight of the
flame;
Enter into the Beloved's Effulgence and earn the bridal
claim!
Thou art still unbaked and knowest not the secret of the
Oven.

An Oriental mystic says: 'On the Primal Day, I heard Divine Melody in the Voice of the harp.' Shah has immortalised this typically Sindh instrument in his *Sur Sorath*, wherein the minstrel Bijal succeeds in inducing King Rai Diyach 'to yield up his head in willing sacrifice in sheer mystical abandonment'.

The Flute, the favourite instrument of Sindh shepherds, laments because of its separation from its original home-the forest. Even so, the heart of the lover weeps because of his separation from the beloved. Shah brings in the analogy of the Flute, when he refers to the piteous wailings of Sasui in the desert. In *Sur Ma'azuri* he says:

The Flute wails and the half-slain woman indulges in cries
of woe.

The former misses its leaves and the latter sheds tears for
her Loved One.

In the Horn-pipe, blown by *Yogis*, the poet hears Divine Melody-'Anhad' or 'the Eternal sound within':

Their (*Yogis*) Horn-Pipe is mysterious and its melody shall
annihilate me:

It is not like the pipe, blown by camel-drivers,
Nor is it like the harmonious sound of the bells, that made
Suhni cross the stream;

Its melody is more excruciating than that of the Fiddle,
that slew Diyach;

Such an instrument is neither in Sindh nor in Hind;
Those who have heard it, aver it is sweeter than the sweet-
est harmony;

They have been transported to the realm of ecstasy;

It is acclaimed by the All-Glorious Himself;

It surpasses in melody all musical instruments;

The tinkling of bells charms flocks and herds, but this melody
thrills human hearts;

O Friends! says Abdul Latif (Shah), this one breathes life
even into the dead.

Shah is seen in his most ecstatic mood in *Sur Sarang*, which he
sang in celebration of the advent of rain, the richest blessing of
Heaven to man. Rain was something of a wondrous marvel in Sind.

In Shah's *Sur Sarang*, 'Lightning' is symbolic of 'Divine Light'
or 'His Universal Grace.'

Once again He hath devised a Universal plan----

Lightnings have shone in all directions and everywhere;
Some have gone to Istanbul, some have advanced to the
West;

Some have shone on China, some have bestowed a glance
on Samarkandis;

Some to Rome, some to Kabul, some to Kandhar have
repaired;

Some to Delhi, some to Deccan and some over Girmar have
glittered;

Some have moved to Jessalmer, some lavished showers
on Bikaner;

The Message of the Master

Some have soaked Bhuj, some have glided to Dhat;
Some have come to shower rain on Umarkote;
O Lord! bless Sindh with plenty and prosperity!
O Beloved Friend! make the whole world happy and
prosperous.

The divers or pearl-seekers alone can dive deep into the sea, covering their faces with a mask of glass. In mystical language, this mask signifies non-attachment.

Those who descended into the sea with a mask of glass
over their faces;
Discovered from the deep lustrous pearls;
They alone do see with their eyes such precious things.

The sea reminds the poet of 'the Ocean of Effulgence' wherein swim those who have the insatiable thirst of love. They are ever in the ocean and yet their thirst remains eternally unquenched.

Those who have drunk a sip from the ocean of beauty;
Suffer from a painful longing of incalculable measure;
Their thirst never abates although they are ever in the sea.

While he discovers a desert of thirst in the glimpse of the Beloved, he discovers in the barren desert of Thar glimpses of the golden city of Heaven—he refers to it as 'Malir', the native place of Marui. The celestial residents are by him called 'Marus' (relatives of Marui):

There are no restrictions there, nor any taxation;
Marus themselves are lustrous ones and their Malir is a
shining place.

Ethics and Devotion

The basis of the poet's moral philosophy is humility. A man of humility is necessarily adorned with other virtues such as patience or fortitude, gratitude, sincerity, universal sympathy and love. All these qualities Shah had in perfect measure. There is nothing in Nature which did not appeal to him for its moral beauty. He discovered in dust the very ornament of his Soul-humility.

What exists in dust exists in nothing else.

Shah's principal and paramount moral teaching is this that one must hug humility under all circumstances and be guided by the dictates of the divine voice within-the voice of conscience. If a man at no time defies this heavenly Voice, he shall not be led into any moral error and shall thus be crowned with glory in heaven. He will leave this world with a sense of spiritual triumph.

With thy face buried between thy knees, pass thy days in
meekness;
Let thy Inner Judge be enthroned; why implorest the
worldly Judge?

A proud man's company is to be shunned because it will impair
your moral calibre:

Abandon all hypocritical talk; bury all sham!
Avoid those that talk in terms of 'I' and 'We'.

Self-conceit destroys, but patience exalts an individual. The patient triumph while the conceited lose the day. Not by retaliation but by forbearance is Self conquered.

Hearing thy ill report, retaliate not:
This is the precious counsel of the Spiritual Preceptor;
Those who annihilate their mind without a murmur, get all
the glory.
Wrath is grief, forbearance is musk.

Shah was a great *Karma Yogi*. He did not believe in and did not commend any idle dependence on God (*Tawakkul*). It is man's duty to work and leave the fruit thereof to God. The troubles on the way may be heart-rending but they have to be faced with manly courage

The Message of the Master

and philosophic endurance. It is only then that victory will kiss your feet. No sloth but honest and persistent labour will win the coveted prize.

The mountain awards no diamonds to lovers of inertia.

It is man's duty to face difficulties; the solution of his difficulties will be provided by the Divine Agency. Human exertion is rewarded by celestial aid:

I shall partly swim and partly Thou shalt make me swim;
I shall partly strive and partly Thou shalt make me strive.

Success comes to those who move; defeat dogs those who sit. There is no help for the inactive and there is no companionship for the slothful. To those who strive, the desert yields musk, the mountain rubies, the ocean pearls and the forest fruit. The world is a battlefield of action, where one has to fight like a hero, abandoning all manner of hesitancy and despair.

Shah also dwells on the code of honour to be observed by true warriors who have to fight for a cause, involving defence of one's honour and moral prestige. In his 'Sur Kedar,' sung by him in commemoration of the martyrdom of the Imams, he says:

A warrior who arms himself with a shield on the day of
battle,
Is attached to life and longs to live;
He alone should call himself a warrior, who welcomes
nothing but combat pure.

A true warrior's wife is always proud of her lord. In fact, the poet puts these words into the mouth of one such brave and noble lady:

Shouldst thou suffer blows in the face, I shall feel proud;
But if thou shouldst have any in the back, I shall hang
down my head.

A warrior, who has fled from the battlefield and returned home to seek a coward's security is thus greeted by his heroic wife:

Thou hast fled and put me to disgrace, O Lord!
Life is short but the slur is permanent.

He has a word of admonition for all- from the king to the hermit, from the warrior to the sailor. To the *Sanyasis* of false colour-

he says:

Those who think of garment or diet are far removed from
God.

Why have ear-flaps bored, why not have the head (vanity)
removed?

Have you decked your ears with yogic rings to lead an
epicure's life?

Nature extends no patronage to the inactive. An indolent man
should take a lesson from Nature. There is nothing in nature that is
not active- the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, the rivers and
everything else in nature moves or works ceaselessly. Why should
man, who is the crown of creation, become sluggish and thus fruit-
lessly waste his God-given energy?

Neither the stars know any rest, nor rivers any tranquillity;
Thou welcomest that which comes to thee without any
exertion!

How shalt thou amass spiritual wealth, if thou sleepest
all night?

Man has brought with himself from Heaven priceless pearls and
jewellery, every breath of his being a ruby of incomparable value. If
he wastes this precious possession, he will come to positive grief
after his departure from this world- when he faces the Celestial
Banker he will become ashamed of himself and his spiritual bank-
ruptcy.

Thou hast squandered thousands and lakhs!
And yet slumber lingers in thine eyes!

Man, the possessor of intrinsic gold and jewellery, deals in lead
and glass here! Alas, how can one expect to realise musk if one
deals in salt!

Thou dealest in salt and covetest musk!

He should deal in that imperishable commodity which is not
diminished even by an iota though Eternity come!

Deal in that commodity which cannot wither with time;
Which, in the Celestial realm, will lose nothing of its lus-
tre;

Have that treasure which may earn for you Eternal Bliss!

The Message of the Master

Man must imbibe the lesson of universal brotherhood from birds, who generally flock together under the sacred impulse of affection and love.

They flock together and never break the bond of love;
Behold! birds maintain a sweeter harmony than humans!

Even straws have a better sense of sympathy than human beings. The dry blades of grass standing on river banks can save a drowning man's life, if he has the knack of holding them in his grip at the fateful moment. If the straws be strong, they respond to his appeal for help; if they be weak, they become uprooted and accompany him in the current! Could there be a better sense of sympathy and readiness to help someone in distress than this? Man must learn the lesson of fidelity from these humble straws.

Behold the obliging nature of these blades of grass!
Either they fetch the drowning man to the bank or go with
him floating in the stream!

Human life is a mere shadow- all pomp and grandeur must one day vanish. It is therefore incumbent on man to devote himself to the service of the Lord- to seek Him and be His true servant:

The earth that lies under our feet, covers the ashes of many
sweet ones;
We have seen with our eyes mighty heroes fall;
Life is so brief-- awake and seek, says Latif.

Service of the Lord lies in self-purification and dedication of the heart to His Name. Shah's views on worship are these:

The body is a sanctuary, the mind a cloister- why resort to
penance?
Why dost thou not worship Him night and day?
Then shalt thou behold Him wherever thou turnest thy
face.

For Shah, the whole world is one vast place of worship and every creature and object in the world a manifestation of divinity. In the pure realm of Bliss, there is no religious discord or disharmony:

There is no disharmony, where the Glorious Lord abides.
The Beloved's face is the sacred arch and the world a
Universal Sanctuary.

Kalyan B. Advani

Here intelligence and knowledge fly and vanish;
The Beautiful One is everywhere, where shall I go and
prostrate!

Again:

For those whose knees form the sacred arch, their own
body is a sanctuary;

What account need they render, who are completely merged
in Him!

Love, Mysticism and Realisation

Shah, as is usual with oriental poets, is in love with love- that mysterious force, which, in the words of Rumi, makes even mountains dance. At the very mention of this pious impulse:

The mountain dances and becomes active.

Shah becomes ecstatic when he sings of love:

I cannot too profusely sing the praise of love;
I spell and read the very word with ecstatic fervour.

Again he says:

Neither yearning hath any end nor the pang of love:
Love hath no limit, it knows its own end.

Mysterious is the thirst of Love- a thirst which knows no satiation even if the entire ocean be quaffed:

I burn and roast and bake, I yearn and seek;
Within me there is Beloved's thirst, which I cannot slake.

If I were to quaff the entire ocean, it will be but a sip for me. This thirst enhances with the quaffing of each draught- this thirst can only be extinguished by thirst!

Those whose self is filled with love have an eternal thirst;
Drink the cup of thirst, inflame thirst with thirst!
O beloved! give me a draught of thirst so that I may
quench thirst with thirst.

In other words the lover's thirst can only be satisfied when the Beloved has an equal thirst for him. Love is another name for martyrdom:

A single drop of Love's wine is beyond all value--Love means martyrdom. One should learn the art of concealing one's love from the potter's kiln which, while burning, emits no vapour or smoke.

Love triumphs over countless dangers and perils- not even all the oceans of all the worlds can curb the ardour of a lover's heart. As love knows no limit, so union also is an event remoter than Eternity:

If I obtain union on the Resurrection Day, the Beloved may
be deemed to be near;
But congratulations on the attainment of union are to be
received beyond that date.

Shah is a poet of separation- he believes in the everlasting
thirst of Love: 'What can be achieved through separation cannot be
achieved through union,' he says. Separation keeps the thirst alive,
union extinguishes it.

May I ever seek Thee but never find Thee!
May not Thy longing disappear from even a single hair
on my body.
Come back O Separation! Union becomes a veil between
me and the Beloved;
The moment my idol comes, the live wounds die.
If wounds die, yearning also dies.

Shah's Beloved has a beauty and an effulgence that transcend all
beauties and effulgences of the universe.

When the Beloved lifted with grace his intoxicated eye;
The sun's rays became dim and the moon lost her lustre;
The pleiades and planets bowed in submission to him;
The Beloved's beauty rendered him the Lustre of gems.

When the Beloved walks, the earth kisses the path he treads; and
the *Houris* pay homages to him:

When the Beloved walks in his graceful manner,
The Earth kisses the path he treads and sings Lord's glory;
The *Houris* stand in reverence, amazed at his beauty;
By God! the Beloved hath a more attractive charm than
everything else.

The mystic poets of the East have often based their philosophy
on the well known Arabic saying: 'Worldly love is a bridge leading
to Divine Love,' Shah's tales prove the truth of what is enshrined in
this mystical utterance. In 'Sur Asa' he makes explicit what is im-
plicit in his romantic stories. He applies the theory to himself- love
was a great purifying force in his life.

Love carded my being as the carder doth cotton;
My hands abandoned all work, my limbs lost all vital
strength.

The Message of the Master

It is in this very *Sur* that he advises the aspirant not to see things with physical eyes, which mislead people into error.

Look not with these physical eyes, set in thy face;
None can ever have a glimpse of the Beloved by looking
through these eyes;
They alone enjoy His Glimpse that close these two.
Have no earthly beloved, let not these black ones (eyes)
move;
Why not seekest the Divine Beloved!

It is in *Sur Asa* that Shah reveals to us directly his real self. Here he wears no garb of a Momal or a Sasui or Lilan or a Noori but reveals himself without any symbolic cover as a seeker of Truth and man of realisation.

Truth has slain my heart into twain;
I cannot breathe even for a moment without the Beloved;
God and God alone reigns in my heart.

Being one with God, he had ascended in thought to that Pure Realm of Bliss, which is not conditioned by time, space and causation. This is a realm where the mortal senses of man cannot work- a land of indescribable wonderment, where neither 'Is' dwells nor 'Is Not'. It cannot be measured by any human scale nor can it be seen by mortal eyes. Human Intelligence has no scope to function there and Human Understanding becomes there but a blind and crippled wayfarer.

In this Realm of Wonder, Human Understanding can comprehend nothing;
A glimpse of the Beauty of the Divine Being cannot be enjoyed by this blind human vision.

Self is a Veil to Self- it is ego that constitutes a bar to Self-realisation:

O aspirant! Your ego is a Veil between thee and the Beloved;
Lo! the Veil vanishes and then all doubts melt into nothing.

In *Sur Asa*, Shah talks of 'Pure Ego', which is the highest attainment of men of spirit. The false ego is the curse of man; that leads to his fall and degradation. The 'Pure Ego' that comes from self-realisation is the greatest boon that could be conferred by Heav-

en on man- the very pinnacle of Divine Effulgence to which man is the inheritor. The utterance of this pure 'I' is the Voice of Divinity, of God Himself. This pure 'I' befits 'Divine self'- the false 'I' or ego is vanity of vanities.

'I' springs from 'I', 'I' befits 'I',
with the blessing of this 'I', become the real 'I'.

Only men of Truth need say this, you (common men) have not to say it. The man who attains self-realisation covets no worldly eulogy; he is above all human laudation and applause. He is one with God, who alone deserves praise.

He renounces all laudation, he rises above praise;
Where there is Divine Presence, there none else has a separate identity;
He (man of realisation) is immersed in those waters that know no limit of love.

Then his very body becomes a rosary and his mind the sacred bead; and his heart becomes a harp, producing melody of divine harmony. His very veins sing the song of 'He is One without a second'. Such people may well sleep and pass no wakeful days and nights because their sleep is but superconscious awakening.

Those whose body is a rosary and mind a bead and heart a harp;
Whose very veins sing the song of 'He is One without a second';
Are awake while they sleep, for their very sleep is contemplation divine.

Like Kabir, Shah at the end of his spiritual quest enters the 'Limitless Realm' and there discovers that the Beloved's Beauty is beyond all measures of imagination.

I seek Him in the Limitless Realm and find that He transcends all limits;
The Beloved's Beauty is beyond all reckoning;
Here my yearning for Him is limitless
And there the Beloved is all indifferent.

The false ego is a bar to real ego- Self-consciousness is a veil before Self-realisation. The moment consciousness of individual or separate identity dies, pure consciousness or self-awakening is born

The Message of the Master

and then all worldly doubts and disturbances vanish like mist in the thin air.

Ego is a veil to Self, beware, O aspirant!
The existence of this (ego) is a bar to union (with God).
Ego is a Veil to Self, hear O aspirant!
When the Veil is removed all strife and turmoil cease.

Again:

We are those for whom we thirst;
O doubt ! depart! We have now realised the Beloved.
We are those for whom we yearn,
He is neither born nor doth give birth- dive into this truth!
If thou shalt see aright, thou shall call every creature God;
O blind sceptic! doubt not this fact.

It is not the daily ritual prayer that leads a man to realise Truth- rather it will lead him to vanity, if he becomes too much conscious of his righteous conduct. A prayer that has a tinge of egoism in it, is not heard in Heaven and yields no spiritual good.

So long as thou art conscious of self, thy prayer is naught;
Abandon all thought of self and then avow: 'God is Great!'

So long as thou art conscious of self, thy prostration is naught;
Lose thy identity and then avow: 'God is Great!'

Shah strikes the final note:

He (God) is not separate from Self, Self is also not separate from Him;
'Man is My mystery and I am his'- know this truth;
The knowers of Truth have all departed singing this tune.

Man apparently is a servant and the Lord is his Master- but where this love is, there is no distinction of Master and slave. The slave himself becomes the Lord of Glory through this alchemy. Then like his Master, he also becomes infinite and without any end:

The slave then hath no beginning or end;
Those who have realised the Beloved, are for ever merged in Him.

The slave becomes the Lord through self-annihilation and then there remains no distinction between the Real Being (God) and the

portrait (man).

Self-annihilation exalts the slave to the pinnacle of glory;
They (true seekers) are the Reality and also the portrait;
The Mystery of the Beloved is beyond all power of words.

After speaking thus at the highest level of super-consciousness, Shah again descends to his usual realm of humble acknowledgement of self-limitation. After saying that he has been to the realm, where there is neither 'Is' nor 'Is Not', he says:

Where there is neither 'Is' nor 'Is not' - this is but an idea
of a creature of clay;
The Beloved's Beauty is beyond all human ken.
Where there is neither 'Is' nor 'Is not'-- this is but an idea
of a creature of clay;
The Beloved's Pure Glory is beyond human vision.

Man, however exalted in spiritual glory, has his limitations; God is infinite and knows no limitation. The limited one cannot understand the limitless one. Even the greatest men of Spirit have not been able to split a single hair of Divine Mystery:

They departed from here as but disappointed ones and not
as exalted ones;
Like a Sparrow, they took but a grain from the Harvest and
were gone;
In this Valley, they were but as bubbles.

Trade, Commerce and Wealth

In *Sur Sri Raag* and *Sur Samoondi*, Shah refers to the commercial enterprise of Sindhi merchants, the commodities in which they dealt, the places with which they had commercial ties, the sea routes they followed in their ventures, the seasons during which they travelled and the various type of boats and vessels then utilised for commercial puposes. In several 'Surs' he makes a mention of some of the important ports and also of the stations where taxes were charged. We also get from some 'Surs' an idea of some of the land routes and the wares exchanged between Sindh and other countries. The symbolism underlying these allusions is as obvious or implicit as fragrance is in the rose or as water is in the clouds.

In *Sur Sri Rag*, the poet makes mention of Porebandar, which indicates that Sindh merchants had transactions by sea with some of the Indian ports on the Western coast. The perils of the Arabian sea were no less serious than the hazards involved in commercial enterprises undertaken to far-flung harbours.

The boat of the frail ones is entrusted to Thy care,
O Lord! mayest Thou lead it safely to Porebandar.

Not only the ocean was tempestuous in itself- the tempests blowing over it added to its wrath and fury. It was lure of pearls that inspired Sindh merchants to sail for far-off places like Aden and breast all manner of dangers with courage of the heart and faith in God. The lustre of gold attracted them to Ceylon (Srilanka) and other far-flung realms.

By His Grace, they conquered tempests,
Reciting His Glorious Name, they arrived in Aden.
Ceylon gold has made sea voyagers restless;
And all the time they yearn for Ceylon and Ceylon.

Sindh merchants had specialised in the trade of precious stones, superfine fabrics and other costly commodities. They sailed in winter by sea and returned in spring by river. Their wives wept and pined in their separation and daily offered perfumed rice to the sea and floated earthen lamps on the river and prayed pathetically for their safe return. They used to hug the helms of ships before they lifted their anchors and parted with their lords with sobs and tears.

In the 'Surs' pertaining to Sasui, references have been made by the poet to the trade of perfumery between Sindh and Kech from where Punhu (Sasui's lover) hailed. He had come to 'Bhambhor', Sasui's birth place, to sell perfume, which filled the air of the city with fragrance of a rare kind. They rode swift and comely camels, whose bodies were decorated with rich pearls and diamonds and artificial flowers of colourful designs. The difficult terrain between Makran and Sindh, interspersed with deserts, forests and mountains, was such as to baffle even the camels of choicest breed. In the absence of railways, swift camels rendered valuable services both for transport and trade. The commodities imported or exported by land or sea were cloth, gold, jewellery, cardamoms, cloves, perfumery, flowery vessels, etc.

In several 'Surs' especially in *Sur Momal Rano*, *Sur Marui*, *Sur Lilan Chanesar*, *Sur Kamod* and *Sur Bilawal*, Shah has thrown light on the wealth of Sindh, luxurious life of its aristocratic families and munificence of its rulers. The way in which royal ladies adorned their persons and the way in which rulers lavishly lived and patronised humble men is amply illustrated in these 'Surs'. About the beauty and self decoration of Momal and her friends, the poet waxes eloquent:

As the roses, so their garments.

Their complexion is rosy and the *shawls* they wear are of green colour, so that they present the appearance of roses in their perfect form. They are human roses, emitting fragrance of musk and ambergris, embalmed as their bodies are with the perfume of the flowers of the most fragrant kind. Even their cots and beds are perfumed with musk. Their ears and arms are adorned with ornaments of silver and gold- they look like idols of a perfect kind, adored and worshipped by princely suitors from far flung realms. Even the baths of Momal's palace are perfumed; she and her friends so perfume their ringlets and persons that black bees swarm over them, labouring under the illusion that they are in a garden of rich oriental roses:

As roses, so their garments;
Their ringlets were dipped in oil of *jasmine*;
Their beauty stings the very heart of love;
The Sweet One's adornment creates mute astonishment.
Their shawls were as green as betel leaves;
They besmeared their ringlets with sandal paste;

The Message of the Master

The ears of the Lovely One were decked with silver and gold.

The golden damsels played freely with silver;
Their chambers were filled with the fragrance of *aloe*;
And their cots with odour of *musk*;
Where the Fair Ones bathe with their heads covered with sandal paste;
There black bees hover over the bathing water;
The Royal suitors shed tears of blood from their eyes-
So pierced was their heart by the shaft of Love.

What is said of Momal and her friends reflects the luxurious life of aristocracy in Shah's days. The chambers of 'Kak Mahal'- Momal's palace- were furnished with beautiful sleeping couches equipped with silken beds and velvety cushions and pillows. The palace garden was like spring in full bloom. All this reminds us of palaces and gardens of Moghul splendour.

The story of *Sur Lilan Chanesar* is based upon a diamond necklace of fabulous price- an ornament possessed or coveted by every queen and princess. Also in this *Sur* we land on allusions to some of the fashions then prevalent among aristocratic ladies- their ears were decked with golden rings and their necks with necklaces of intricate design; antimony enhanced the bewitching darkness of their eyes and oils of rare varieties enriched the lustre and loveliness of their ringlets. In *Sur Marui* we find references to several varieties of rich cloth- woollen shawls, the striped silken cloth known as 'Elachi', cloths of rosy colours (Khuinba) and of blue colour (Abeer), the woollen cloth called 'Aram' and the well-known silken cloth *Pata Cheer*. There is also a casual reference symbolic of aristocratic diet and beverages.

In *Sur Kamod*, *Sur Prabhati* and *Sur Bilawal*, we have evidence (may be in an exaggerated form) of the enormity of the munificence and patronage of Sindh monarchs.

Jam Tamachi, the ruler, falls in love with Noori, a fisherman's daughter. In her eyes dwelt magic and in her heart 'humility of a wonderful nature'. After taking her into wedlock, he lavishes on her relatives and community members gifts in the form of precious stones and metals-- pearls, diamonds, gold, silver, rubies, turquoises- he poured bottles of perfume on them and on the floor of their humble and stenchy cottages.

Sitting in the midst of fishermen, he put his hand in diamonds;
All stench vanished-- he poured perfume on a lavish scale;

Costly gifts he distributed like ordinary fruit;
In the fishermen's huts, he scattered diamonds and pearls

like scales of fish;
Gems he gave and exhausted his store of rubies;

He sprinkled turquoises over the indigent folk;
There, says Abdul Latif, he threw away all his precious

stones.

Reference has already been made to the munificence of the ruler of Las Bella, Sapar Sakhi, who awarded a hundred horses of choicest Arab breed to a musician of poor talent for his sincerity and humility. He also speaks highly of the great Sama ruler of Sindh-- Jadam Jakhro-- in terms of unparalleled encomium:

Where Jadam was created, there only that much clay was
available.

Again:

At the sight of Jadam, no other ruler occurs to the mind;
When a spring is discovered, there is no need to dig any
other wells.

But Royal munificence, at its zenith, is symbolised in the act of Rai Diyach, who sacrificed his head in response to the mystic appeal of a minstrel's (Bijal's) harp.

Art of Narration

Shah has only touched the most significant episodes in the stories. He has portrayed the emotions and feelings of the heroines, describing at the same time in picturesque words the scenic background of every situation. While reading a story of Shah, we can visualise before our mind's eye the atmosphere or scenic background of a particular situation through the magic force of his language.

Shah himself plays the role of the heroine. The heroine speaks to us through the poet. Where there is a gap between one utterance of the heroine and the other, the poet himself throws light on the situation or on the psychology of the heroine. Where there are two characters, as in *Sur Sorath*, -viz Rai Diyach, the King, and Bijal, the minstrel-- the poet acts as an interpreter.

In the final *Dastan* (Canto) of every *Sur*- that is, at the end of every *Sur* he soars from the physical to the spiritual plane. Thus Momal says at the end of *Sur Momal Rano* :

Where shall I spur my camel? There is effulgence all
round;
Within me is rosy Kak and within me its orchards;
All is Rano and Rano, none else hath existence.

Dialogue, portrayal of inner feelings, scenic description and characterisation are all present in his stories. An outstanding example in this respect is *Sur Sorath*, where the poet has concentrated his art on the conversation between the King and the minstrel.

Except the story of Tamachi and Noori, as presented in *Sur Kamod*, all other stories in the *Risalo* are of tragic character, their chief theme being the heroic struggle of man against Destiny and the futility of such a struggle against inexorable Fate.

Shah's *Sur Kedar* testifies that the poet could also handle war poetry with consummate skill-- in fact there was no branch or type of poetry in which he did not excel. There is a ring of martial valour and heroism in his utterances in *Sur Kedar*. His similes bear the stamp of military skill though he had not actively participated in any military combat. He, however, lived in times of tribulation and trouble and had therefore an intimate knowledge of military feuds and strategy. Shah witnessed invasion by the much dreaded Nadir Shah. Hence his war poetry bears the stamp of verisimilitude,

couched in a language of poetic loftiness and grandeur. *Sur Kedar* can be styled as a 'Grand Elegy'. In *Sur Kedar* Shah has dealt with the pathos laden theme of Imam Hussein's martyrdom on the battlefield of Karbala. The *Sur*, for its pathetic intensity, is unparalleled in Sindhi poetry. Although the main theme is Imam Hussein's martyrdom on the plain of Karbala, the poet has placed before men of true heroism, ideals of great and permanent value, and has depicted a vivid picture of ancient warfare and military valour:

O Prince of true valour! So long as thou are alive;
Drink deep from the cup of steel at the feast of arms!

Ancient warfare was a test of personal valour and heroism-- warriors had to fight face to face and had therefore to exhibit not only courage of the highest type but also consummate skill in the handling of arms such as spears, axes, daggers, swords and maces. Before the actual combat commenced, trumpets were blown and drums beaten to infuse added courage into the hearts of soldiers, who later fought with an almost reckless fury and fervour. The actual fight in ancient times was always preceded by the blowing of conches or trumpets, clarions or pipes and drums.

In the second and the third canto of Shah's *Sur Kedar* a true picture of the battlefield is depicted- a picture that forcefully and truly presents before our inside eye all that was associated with ancient warfare. A few verses may be quoted by way of illustration:

After the setting of the moon, the Brave Ones started on
their journey;
With them were drums, hatchets, javelins, poniards and
ramrods;
The brave met the brave, their swords clashed and crackled;
They challenged and struck, piling dead upon dead;
The fighters fell, their heads danced on earth,
And the field resounded with great tumult.
On that side the challenge, on this side the response;
The soldiers and steeds were in wedlock united.
They polish their axes and swords to save from rust;
The valorous ones never lift spears from their shoulders;
The Wooers of death are ever alert on the field.

The warriors rode not only horses but elephants on the battlefield:

The elephants were hacked and there were streams of blood.

The Message of the Master

Noble ideals of heroism have been enunciated by Shah in this *Sur*. A true warrior is he who fights in the name of God and does not in the slightest degree swerve from the field. 'Life is brief but censure is permanent', he says. A warrior may save his life by running away from the battlefield but he will earn for himself permanent ignominy. What is the use of saving one's life (which, after all, like the flight of a bird is so brief), when it is attended by everlasting disgrace?

Of women whose lords laid down their lives on the field;
Each sings in sad but proud strain:
'O sisters! this hero has glorified his ancestors'.

Symbolism of Stories

Symbolism is the very soul of Shah's poetry. There is no *Sur* of his Risalo, whose fabric is not woven out of variegated treads of mystic symbolism. Shah's symbolism in his stories is of two kinds: Man's search for God and God's choice of a particular individual as His favourite. This two-fold symbolism is illustrated by a variety of beautiful similes, metaphors and allegories.

In Shah's love tales, the aspirant is represented as the heroine and God as the hero. The aspirant plays in turn the roles of Lilan, Momal, Suhni, Sasui, Noori and Marui; and God plays the respective roles of Chancesar, Rano, Mehar or Sahir, Punhu, Tamachi and Maru(Khetsen). The aspirant has two types of foes--internal and external. The mind and the world (with its temptations) are his two eternal enemies.

In the *Surs*, devoted to the trials and tribulations of Sausi, Shah shows that mountains, deserts, streams and forests do not constitute any barrier to the progress of the true aspirant. In other words, the true aspirant is not deterred by perils and calamities, however heart-rending they might be. Kech, the native place of Punhu, stands for the golden city laid in Heaven, the destination of the seekers of Truth. Mountains like 'Haro' and 'Pab', the river 'Hab' and the vast barren land lying on the way are all suggestive of the heart-wrecking troubles of the 'Path'. It is a lonely journey and the aspirant has to fight heroically and single-handed the danger on the way. It is a journey, to be undertaken by the aspirant not only solitarily, but without any material or worldly encumbrances. Love, intense love, is his only companion:

The unburdened crossed Mount Haro,
The burdened ones remained where they were.
She who takes nothing with herself wins the Beloved;
She who decks herself forfeits union.

In this journey, the aspirant should be armed with the dagger of 'La' i.e. non-possession and should assassinate his material desires with it.

Not with wealth, but with self-oblivion, she achieved the
Beloved.

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Shah has infused into Sasui all the longing of his Soul and the agony of his heart, devoting to her trials and tribulations no less than five *Surs*. Other heroines have merited only one *Sur* at his hands. Sasui was a delicate creature, brought up in an atmosphere of luxury and comfort. She was the daughter of a rich washerman of Bhambhor. Punhu, the prince of Kech, had come to Bhambhor in connection with a commercial enterprise. He fell in love with her and worked in disguise under her father as an ordinary assistant. He was subsequently carried away one night by his brothers on a camel while he was in deep sleep, the result of an orgy of wine drinking. When Sasui woke up in the morning, she found Punhu missing; and maddened by the loss of her lord, she renounced her home and undertook to cross difficult mountain passes and deserts to reach and win back the 'lustrous one' - her life, her soul, her everything.

'She had perhaps learnt the art of endless quest from the deer of Cathay and the Huma (Phoenix), which both know no rest,' says Shah in *Sur Desi*. It is not possible for ordinary creatures to undergo the trials and tribulations of such a perilous journey. Men of God, like Sasui, achieve immortality by undergoing trials and sufferings for His sake and by dying as martyrs in the cause of love. Ages pass but their names remain permanently inscribed in the Book of Life.

Born in a humble desert cottage, Marui is yet a lighthouse of truth and fidelity to the entire race of women. Says she to Umar:

Thy palaces have wrecked my heart, and their chambers
have slain me;
Nay, it is the pain of parental separation that has devastated
me more,
Thar thy palaces with their lofty balconies.

Again:

That which to you is Eid, O Umar! is mourning for us;
They (my parents) have abandoned all pleasure and
purchases;
The Marus of Malir are martyrs to yearning for me.

King Umar had carried her away forcibly from the village well and imprisoned her in his palace at Umarkot. She spurned all offers for a life of luxury and comfort made to her by Umar. She refused to change even her tattered blanket of Thar wool, lest the desert maids should accuse her of a breach of their moral code and feel eternally ashamed because of her conduct:

Kalyan B. Advani

The simple girl is stitching and restitching her tattered
blanket-- So strong is her love;
It is reduced to shreds, yet she is not tired of mending it;
Lest people should say, 'Thou hast degraded desert maids'.

To her, privation in the company of her friends was better than
the luxuries of the palace:

Hunger with friends is a luxury, privation with them a
pleasure.

Shah's *Sur Marui* contains some of the best and the most soul-
stirring patriotic poetry in the world. Marui is the ideal of all patri-
ots. To her even the dust of her native land is *musk* or perfume of
the rarest kind:

I regard the dust of my native land as *musk*.

She is prepared to brush the feet of her native messenger with
her eye lashes and prays to Umar that after her demise her body be
embalmed with the juice of the vines of Thar and buried under her
native sand-- and then even death will be a new life for her.

Should I perish here, thirsting for my native land;
Build my grave, O Monarch! near my parental abode;
Embalm my remains with desert vines;
Death will be a new lease of life for me should my body
go to Malir.

Like Marui, Noori is also of humble birth. She was born in a
fisherman's cottage. Although Destiny ordained that she be born in
the midst of humble folk, she was yet a pearl of a woman-- an ex-
quisite beauty, adorned with the ornament of humility. Jam Tamachi
fell in love with her at the very first sight and elevated her to the po-
sition of the Chief Queen.

As Tamachi loves Noori for her humility, so God loves those
who are humble and low.

There was not even a tinge of pride in the fisherwoman's
mind;
There was a tender delicacy in her eyes, that charmed
the King;
Of all the people, she captured the heart of the King with
her gracious coyness.

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The beauty of Momal and her friends is beyond any scope of words and their self-adornment beggars all human language. They were human roses with leaf-like green shawls over their heads and rapier-like glances in their saucy eyes. Momal's eyes possessed axes that slew sovereigns, the testimony whereof was furnished by the concourse of graves standing on the banks of river Kak, flowing by her Kak Palace.

Of amorous charm, Momal's eyes have axes,
Where with she slays princes and kings;
Behold scores of princely graves on the banks of Kak!

Her eyes cut across lovers' hearts as the fragment of a diamond
cuts through a piece of glass:

In Momal's eyes, there are diamonds of amorous magic;
The hearts of all are cut by a single glance of her.

At last, Rano, with his astute intelligence, triumphs over the magic contrivances of Kak and wins her hand. Very soon, however, separation follows. Rano did not turn up one night on time and Momal, through timid fear or a desire for solace, took her sister Somal as her bed-partner. When, however, Rano arrived and saw Momal in the embrace of another partner, he left agonised and quietly left the palace, leaving his stick by her side. Thereafter, he kept away for ever from Momal. Momal, who has otherwise been haughty and ravishing, became a mere skeleton as a result of her constant pining away for Rano. She then became absolutely humble and renounced all worldly luxuries and pleasures.

O Rana! My eyes get fraught with tears at the sight of
these chambers;
My bedsteads are now covered with dust and look lustreless;
These palaces, rose-beds, bowers and musky gardens have
all decayed without you.
Her narcissus-like eyes lost their lustre and became absolutely
dry:

Agony hath dried my eyes, leaving no tears in them:

Momal had to suffer life-long separation because of her error;
even so, a man of God, if he falls even once into error, is rejected by
Him for ever.

Like Momal, Lilan is also a Royal lady of great charm and

beauty. She is Chanesar's queen. Kauru, a princess in the guise of a maid-servant in her palace and a lover of Chanesar, tempts Lilan to part with Chanesar for a night in her favour in exchange of a necklace of priceless diamonds. Lilan succumbs to the tempting offer and loses Chanesar for ever. Chanesar, like Rano, is very sensitive and his sense of self-respect revolts when he comes to know about Lilan's frivolity. He breaks with her; and then follows Lilan's repentance and supplication.

I should throw the ornament into flames and cast the
necklace into fire;
Should I have back my Lord, I should feel exalted even in
an unadorned state.

Again:

Come, O Lord! that I may fling the ornament into fire in
your presence.

He who, after once loving the Lord, runs after worldly things of
shine and glitter, loses God's favour as Lilan lost Chanesar's.

Says Lilan:

No fair one's coquetry will succeed with Chanesar;
This have I realised that this is not a place for the
exhibition of blandishments.

Verily:

This is door where Lord's favourites are seen shedding
tears.

Suhni was wedded to Dam but her heart was attached to Sahir or Mehar, a prince in the guise of a grazer of buffaloes, who subsequently became a hermit, sitting on the other side of a fierce and tortuous river. Suhni went to her lover every night, whatever the weather, swimming across the river on an earthen pot. Her sister-in-law, detecting this, once deluded her by replacing the baked pot with an unbaked one. It gave way and she was drowned. Thus she perished as a martyr to love. Her lover also jumped after her and thus both became united for ever in death.

Without Sahir, Suhni was an ailing creature; her medicine
lay in Sahir's glimpse;
She regained her health, the moment she saw the

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beloved one.

Suhni was underterred by obstacles, however unsurmountable, for there was in her the impetuous surge of that mysterious ocean known as 'Love', which triumphs over a thousand illusory seas.

For those that thirst for the Beloved, the ocean becomes a mere pebble.

She would have died even otherwise but by dying in the cause of love, she attained immortality. Even so, those who perish on the 'Path' achieve an undying name and fame. They live for ages both here and there.

How else would she have been heard of, if she had not plunged herself into the deep?

She would have died even otherwise, but by thus dying she achieved life eternal.

Shah Abdul Latif

M. M. Gidvani

Shah Abdul Latif was born in A.D. 1689 in a small village in the district of Hyderabad (Sindh), in a Sayyid family. His great-grandfather was Sayyid Abdul Karim Shah, a saint well known in Sindh. He is now popularly called 'Shah Karim', and a large fair is still held annually in his memory at Bulri Sharif.

Many wonderful stories are related of the childhood of Shah Latif. It is said that as a bare stripling of four years he was placed under a teacher to learn his alphabet. The preceptor asked him to repeat *Alif*, the first letter. The child obeyed and said *Alif*. The teacher then asked him to repeat *Be* or 'B', the second letter, but this the child flatly refused to do, and said there is no 'B.' The teacher then brought the perverse child to his father, Shah Habib and related the whole story. The father listened with rapt attention, and being himself a wise man, understood the child's mystery. He jumped with joy, and embracing Latif and kissing him, exclaimed, 'Child, you have understood alright.'

On another occasion, it is believed, the marvellous boy slipped from the company of his playmates and hid himself in the hollow trunk of a tree, where he remained immersed in thought for three days, after which he was traced by his father.

These stories and others, showing the peculiar habits and strange ways of young Latif, leave no doubt but that he was indeed a precocious child. He loved solitude and would often-times be seen

sitting in a corner with his face furrowed as if buried in deep thought. Often he would walk into jungles and disappear for days together.

Gradually Shah Latif's fame began to spread far and wide, and the number of his disciples grew day by day. But he still loved to wander over hills with *faqirs* and sit in a corner with recluse. After some time, however, he settled down and built himself a hermitage in a lonely spot among sandhills surrounded by a dark forest that was intersected by beautiful lakes. His fame as a poet and a saint was soon established, but the honour he received was not without its inconveniences. It created rivalries, and brought to the poet the enmity of various leaders, some of whom actually attempted to kill him. But Latif remained unaffected, and came out triumphant in the end by his faith in God. He died in the year A.D. 1752, and it is believed that some of his disciples followed him that very day, dying of grief.

His Character

Shah Latif was tall and well built. He had a broad forehead and a pleasing complexion. His temper was uniformly cheerful. He was simple in dress, simple in food, and in all things. He was full of kindness and Love, and he showed it not only to human beings, but also to birds and animals.

His gentleness and humility were unique, and he was consistently honest and upright in his dealings. He was of an independent nature, quite unlike some of the contemporary poets of Persia and India.

His Creed

The class of religious thinkers to which our poet belonged, viz. Sufis, is generally considered heretic and not of the true faith. It has never received countenance from the orthodox preceptors of Islam, and there are instances when its members have been persecuted to death for their beliefs. Thus, the famous Mansur al-Hallaj was quartered for proclaiming the downright heretical doctrine, 'I am God.' Latif is a rare instance of a Sufi true to the tenets of Sufism and yet faithful to the creed and orthodox ritual of the Prophet (Peace be

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upon him). He used to pray five times daily, tell the beads, fast, and read the Quran. But he observed the orthodox forms and ceremonials merely to set an example to the ignorant masses, and he quite knew their limitations. While he said the prescribed prayers regularly, he still held that;

Fasts are good and prayers may be sound,
But by something else is the Beloved found.

His was a creed of perfect tolerance in thought and action. Freedom to think and to worship as he liked was man's highest privilege, and so he was opposed to forced conversions.

True to all things else, Latif was, however, unable to subscribe to one of the injunctions of the Quran—the prohibition against singing and dancing. He was wonderfully sensitive to the influence of music, which touched his very soul and tuned it with the Infinite. He is reported to have said once, 'In my heart there is a tree of Divine Love which dries up unless I sing or listen to music. I am restless without it, but with it I commune with the Creator.' He lived in an atmosphere which vibrated with waves of harmony, and departed listening to melodious strains of the song of Divine Love. Indeed, so intense was his love of music, that generations of disciples have sung their lives away at his shrine, and the woods and sandhills, his favourite haunts, still resound with the echoes of Sasui wailing in the wilderness for her Punhu, Suhni crossing the stream and crying in the whirlpool for Mehar's hand, or Momal groaning in the flames for a last loving look from Rano. Even now every Friday evening a huge concourse of devoted *faqirs* gathers on Bhit, the shrine of Shah Latif, and sings in heart-rending strains his songs of separation and union.*

* The Shah jo raag is recited every night after Isha prayers till the Fajr prayers.
(Editor)

Some Anecdotes

I

A blind man once went to Latif for blessing to regain his lost vision. At that moment the poet was in a state of mental absorption and wholly oblivious to the external world. After a short while the blind man received light in his eyes, and began rejoicing over his good fortune. Latif, now gaining consciousness, inquired the reason for so much joy, whereupon the man said, 'Sire, I came here blind and asked for your Blessing. Now I have attained light by your favour.' Latif, disclaiming all knowledge of the matter, said that gratitude and thanksgiving were due to God, who had heard his prayer. Then he repeated the following couplet:

'The same God, sometimes He cancels the path, sometimes He is a guide on the path. He degrades and He exalts.'

II

One day in the presence of Latif and his assembly a *faqir* related that a certain man's wife ran away with her paramour. Latif, in feigned wonder, exclaimed, "Really?" The answer being in the affirmative, he said, Credit be to her; that is exactly what she ought to have done. Saying this, he was lost in contemplation for some time, after which the disciples reverently inquired the reason of so much thought. The poet replied, 'Consider this, my friends. A weak woman plucked so much courage as to elope with her lover. We males have not the courage to run away with our lover, namely God.'

III

On another occasion Latif had retired to the trunk of a tree and was telling beads and repeating God's name when two milkmaids came up to rest under the shade of a tree. They began to inquire after each other's condition. One said to the other, 'Sister, I have met my

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lover so many times this month; how many times have you met yours?' To this the other replied, 'Sister, why inquire as to the number of times? Why should we keep an account with our lovers?' Latif, who was listening attentively to this dialogue, was much impressed by the second maiden's answer, and at once throwing aside his rosary, said, 'Indeed, why keep an account with our Lover [God]?'

IV

Once a *faqir* was milking his cow. He had tied the little calf at some distance, and the poor thing was struggling hard to reach its mother. Latif thereupon requested the *faqir* to allow the poor calf to go and suck the milk which was its birthright; but, as the *faqir* was reluctant, he unfastened the calf himself. The little animal jumped eagerly forward to its mother and soon emptied her teats. The poet, seeing this, remarked that the seeker also ought to pursue his object with similar zeal and single-mindedness.

V

On another occasion the poet was sitting by the roadside when some travellers bound on the Holy pilgrimage to Mecca happened to pass by. Learning from them the object of their journey, he also joined the caravan. Soon after, they halted near stream of fresh water, which was being approached by a herd of thirsty goats. They came, drank water to their fill, and turned their backs to the stream, regarding it no more. The poet observed all this, and uttered the following extempore verse:

'I search far and wide and do not find.
May I never meet my Friend!
The burning desire of longing in the heart is
cooled by meeting.'

With these words he returned home, and it is said that he never went out on any travels again.

The Risalo

The poetical works of Shah Latif have been collected together and printed in book form in what is known as his *Risalo* or 'Works'.

The first edition of this book was printed in Leipzig in 1866 through the efforts of Dr. Trumpp, while another was printed in Bombay the following year. These have since been amended and improved through the zeal of the Government Educational Department.

This is not the place to describe the skill of the poet's technique or the subtleties of his metrical composition. In the subject-matter of his poetry Latif has but a single theme-Divine Love. He knows only *Alif* (A); for him there is no *Be* (B). But his supreme merit does not lie in the theme he has chosen; that is but common to every Sufi poet. Hafiz, Jami, Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, and Attar all deal with Divine Love and Union, each in his own way. Latif's genius is revealed in the method adopted for communicating his teachings in the garb in which he has presented them to the reader. His supreme merit lies in an emotional appeal to all, learned and unlearned, through human stories; preaching Divine Love through human love. He has struck for himself an altogether original path. He has made use of different local tales, current ballads, and popular love stories sung by wandering bards and minstrels, and woven out of them all a wonderful fabric of mystic song. By such means he has achieved what other mystics fail to do-winning the interest of the average man and woman. There is scarcely any branch of life which he has not touched, with the one common object of illustrating his Religion of Love. Sometimes he is a patient waiting for a physician to heal him; sometimes a pearl-diver who brings his pearls as humble offerings and waits for their acceptance; then a simple village maiden who has spun a thread on her spinning-wheel and is diffident of the quality of her thread; at another time a sailor's wife who mourns for her lover out on distant seas; and then Sasui wailing in the desert for her Punhu; Suhni crying in the stream for Mehar's hand; Momal longing

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for Rano's kiss in the fire; Marui pining for her original home; Hir love-lorn for her Ranjhu-always the seeker yearning for Union with the Beloved. Apart from the tales which he has absorbed into his poetry, the poet's knowledge of the technical terms of different trades and professions is indeed wonderful. What is said of Shakespeare can in a measure be justly affirmed of Shah Latif: that he seemed to have entered and specialized in all professions. None but an experienced seaman could use his vocabulary of the sea, and that too with such a mastery of description. None but a trader, a blacksmith, a weaver, could use the familiar imagery and expressions of his respective craft. Their influence may well be imagined. In a hundred different ways, in a hundred different garbs, he presents the same lesson, viz. seeking the Truth, not the trumperies of the world, its false and brittle glassware, but real pearls; not pleasures which are meant to allure the devotee from the path, but the goal; not Dum, the false lover, but Mehar, the chosen Love of the Heart. This is conveyed in a manner that charms because it is so pleasant, by repetition that does not tire because it is not monotonous, through a medium which he uses with confidence and mastery while enriching it by his touch, with such a wealth of simile and metaphor that reader finds himself spellbound.

'Like a three years' child he must stand and listen'.

Tales On Which The Poems Are Based

I. Suhni and Mehar

Of the popular tales of Sind, that of Suhni and Mehar is perhaps the most romantic. When the Moghul Emperor, Shah Jahan, ruled over Delhi there was a wealthy potter named Tala, in Gujarat (a village in the Punjab), who had a beautiful daughter named Mahi. About that time a handsome youth named Izzat Beg, son of a merchant of Bukhara, had started on his Indian tour, and visited Lahore and Delhi, buying and selling merchandise. He chanced to pass through the village of Gujarat and fell madly in love with the potter's daughter. So he stayed away indefinitely and forgot his home and profession.

'A wizard old his cup extends,
Which whose tastes forgets his former friends,
Sire, ancestors, himself.'

He used to visit the potter's house constantly on the pretext of buying the pots, and so oblivious was he of his state that in a short time he converted all his wealth into pottery. His home was now full of pots-small pots, big pots, pots of all sizes and shapes. Very soon he was obliged to open a shop and turn pot-seller to maintain himself. But his heart being with Suhni, how could he attend to retailing earthenware, he who dealt in the commodity of Love? So the shop was closed and Izzat Beg, son of the wealthy merchant of Bukhara, became a menial in the service of Tala, whose daughter he loved. First they put him to knead the clay-

'In that old potter's shop..... alone
With the clay-population round the rows.'

Then they gave him a herd of buffaloes to graze, and he did graze the buffaloes as a labour of love. At last one evening chance

brought him face to face with his beloved, to whom he then confessed the secret of his heart. Suhni* was stuck with the rare devotion, and she gave her heart to her father's servant. Then followed a course of clandestine meetings, but not for long. The girl's parents suspected the attachment and summarily dismissed the grazier of buffaloes who dared to love their daughter, and the daughter herself they speedily married to a neighbour's son. Unfortunately there was no obliging Friar Lawrence to aid this Indian Juliet, who, unhappy bride, spurned her hateful husband's advances and forsook all food and drink. She lived in perpetual mourning, so that even her husband soon grew tired of her. Meanwhile Suhni contrived to communicate with her lover through a friend.

Unhappy Izzat Beg wandered about for some time, whereafter he went and established himself in a cottage on the other side of the river Chenab. Even when oceans divide, love can stem the tide, and so every night the Bukhara youth would swim across the river and meet his beloved. After a time, however, he received a wound in the side and so could not move out of bed, and Suhni used to steal from her house at night, swim across the river on earthen jar, and meet her sick lover. This continued for some time, but as 'the course of true love never did run smooth,' even this was not to be. Suhni's sister-in-law discovered these secret meetings, and also observed that Suhni, after returning from her lover, always hid her jar under a heap of grass. So one night she treacherously removed that jar and substituted in its place another one of sunbaked clay. The next night Suhni came as usual, took her jar, and entered the stream. Soon after, as the kutch** jar could not stand water, it broke, and poor Suhni was cast upon the waves. Bitter was her wailing and loud her cries and call to her Mehar to come to her rescue, but all in vain. A short while after, as Suhni was grappling with the waves, Mehar learnt of her danger and went to her aid, but the poor potter-girl was already buried in her watery grave. Thereupon Mehar too in his grief jumped into the river, and the two were thus united in death.

II. Sasui and Punhu

The tale of the loves of Sasui and Punhu is the most popular of

* Literally it means 'The Beautiful One'.

** Unbaked.

all tales in Sindh. The pangs of separation of Sasui, her sufferings in search of Punhu, her bare-footed wanderings in mountains in the burning sun, her sorrowful appeals to the beasts of the desert to sympathize with her suffering and to show her kindness and trace her lost Punhu, finally her romantic death and ultimate union with her lover-all these are the common property of Sindh belonging to all creeds, rich and poor, learned and ignorant. The camel-men, carrying merchandise through sandy wastes, beguile their tedious hours of night by singing at the top of their voices the sorrows of Sasui. One camel-man finishes his song, and the next moment another one from the rear takes up the refrain. Thus do they cheer their path by singing melancholy strains and cheat the hours of their tedium. Lovers in their bowers, bargemen, shepherds, ploughboys, camel-men, hermits, students- all sing in the same strain the grief of separation-the 'Song of Sasui.' Indeed, so often have their loves been sung during these centuries that the very air of Sindh is full of echoes of 'Sasui' and 'Punhu.' There is the sandy desert of Sindh, the moonlit night, the passing caravan, and the camel-men singing the song of Sasui, and 'Wilderness were paradise enow.' It would make pure poetry, and indeed dull must he be of soul who does not feel himself elevated and tuned with the Infinite and made one with Nature. The scenes and the sounds would touch a secret chord, and striking grief that is Divine, could whisper to the soul messages from her own abode that is forgotten.

Sasui was the daughter of a Sindhi Brahman (Hindu priest) named Naoon. At her birth the astrologers prophesied that she was destined to wed a Musulman. At this the unhappy parents, rather than suffer this disgrace that was in store for them, and to avert the blow of destiny, placed the baby in a box and threw it in a river. This box was picked up by a Muslim washerman named Muhammad, who, having no child of his own, brought up the girl as his own daughter. Time passed and Sasui grew into a beautiful young woman. Now about this time there was a famine in the neighbouring country of Kaich-Markran. The chief of this hilly tract, prepared a caravan, and placing his son Punhu at its head sent it to Sindh for grain. The caravan arrived at Bhambhor, the native place of Muhammad the washerman and Sasui his adopted daughter. There it was

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that Sasui and Punhu saw each other and fell madly in Love at first sight. The result was that when the caravan of Kaich was returning, Punhu, their leader, declined to join them. He stayed away at Bhambhor and would not part from Sasui.

Great was the grief of the Balochi Sardar when he learnt of Punhu's plight. He sent his other sons with attendants to travel to Sindh and bring Punhu back to his home. When these arrived at Bhambhor, Sasui, considering them as her brothers-in-law, gave them a cordial welcome and hospitality befitting their position. The guests stayed for some days, after which one night they placed Punhu on a camel and stole away, leaving Sasui behind. Morning revealed the truth to the girl who was thus forsaken: no Punhu, no brothers, no camels, no camel-men!-all were gone, and poor Sasui was deserted. She beat her breast and tore her hair and threw dust on her face. She ran like a stricken deer; she pursued the camel-track, but the caravan was nowhere to be seen. The traitors had crossed the borders of Sindh. But without Punhu there was no turning back, so she wandered in every direction, crying to the hills and dales, trees and streams, birds and beasts, 'Punhu, Punhu, where is my lost Punhu?' Then she met a goat-herd who, fascinated by her youth and beauty, attempted to assail her virtue; but she fled and cried for help, when mother earth opened her bosom and received her chaste daughter in a fond embrace. The goats-herd, seeing this miracle, was struck with awe, and collected a heap of stones and piled them together to mark her grave. Some days passed, when Punhu, disconsolate in grief, contrived to escape from his parents and flee to Bhambhor. A chance would have it, he passed by Sasui's grave, and thinking it to be the shrine of a saint, he bowed down before it and begged for blessings. A voice came from the grave and a call to Punhu, and then two arms were extended and received Punhu inside. Thus the earth, kinder than man, united the ill-starred pair in death. The prophecy of the astrologers had come true.

III. Momal and Rano

A Hindu Raja of Sindh, named Nanda, once went a-hunting, when he saw a wild pig and pursued it. The beast jumped into a river, but the rider and horse followed it. Strange to say, wherever the

pig went the water changed into dry land, so that the pursued and the pursuer reached the other side in safety. The Raja, seeing this marvel, determined more than ever to kill the beast, and at last succeeded in his object. Cutting the carcass into pieces he verified its magic influence by throwing portions of it into water. The perishable parts he threw away but kept the teeth. With the help of these he took all his treasures to the river and buried them in its bosom thus insuring them against all risks of fire or theft. The secret of the whole affair he kept to himself. One day, while he was out, an anchorite came and begged for alms at the palace gates. Momal, one of the nine princesses, heard the prayer and asked the beggar what he wanted. The beggar, feigning serious illness, said: 'Princess, great is my pain and danger. Had I but a pig's tooth my life would be saved.' Momal, remembering that there was a tooth in her father's room, went and brought it, and ignorant of its properties and the consequences of her action, gave it away to the false beggar, who, thanking her profusely, went his way. When King Nanda returned and learnt of this, he flew into a rage, and was about to kill Momal, when his other daughter, the wise Somal, interceded on her behalf and promised to restore the lost treasures to her father. Thereafter she, accompanied by Momal, and a maidservant named Natar, went out of the city, learnt sorcery, and built in a wilderness a wonderful magic mansion around which she guided a stream of sea-water. This she named Kak. Further, she contrived a wonderful maze, placed ferocious beasts, born of her sorcery, at its corners, and then proclaimed that the first man to cross the maze and reach the palace would win Momal for his bride. Soon after, the fame of the beautiful princess in the wonder-mansion of the wilderness spread far and wide, and brought many a fair youth to try his fortune and secure the beauty for a bride. They all came for a bride, but lost their wealth and their lives in the bargain. Thus, by her sorcery, Momal filled up the hollows in her father's treasury and very soon paid back all that was lost by her folly.

At last there came one Rano, the wisest vizier of Umarkot, who by his extraordinary cleverness contrived to find his way to Momal's chamber and also to her heart. This was followed by clandestine meetings. Rano travelled every night on a swift she-camel and re-

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turned home before daybreak. It was not long, however, before the attachment was discovered, and Momal's father compelled Somal, his clever daughter, to pressure, and soon spread her nets. She disguised herself in male attire and slept by the side of her sister after poisoning the mind of Rano by a false report against her. When Rano came at night he obtained proof with his own eyes of Momal's faithlessness, and retired in a rage after leaving his stick behind. Momal, failing to reconcile Rano, at last journeyed to his palace disguised as a male ascetic. She soon won her way into Rano's favour, disguised as a hermit skilful in throwing dice. One day, however, she was discovered. She begged for reconciliation, but finding Rano immovable, she went and lighted a fire and threw herself into the flames. When Rano heard of it he hastened to the spot, entreated Momal to come out, saying: 'Wrong was I, and blinded by my jealousy. Forgive and come out, O Momal.' 'Love, I die happy now' was her only answer, and then the *Suttee* perished. Presently Rano, in grief and remorse, also leapt in, and thus death united those whom life had parted.

IV. Hir and Ranjhu

South-west of Lahore, in the Punjab, was a village named Jhang Siyal, ruled over by a chief called Chuchak. He had a daughter Hir, famed for beauty and virtue.

In the neighbourhood of Jhang Siyal was another village, the chief of which was Manjhu, who had eight sons. The youngest was Ranjhu, very handsome, and like Joseph, son of Jacob, well beloved of his father. When Ranjhu was only fourteen years of age his father died, and his brothers, who were always jealous of him, turned him away with only a small pittance. Ranjhu did not lose heart nor did he harbour any ill-feeling against his brothers, but quietly he left his native village and proceeded to Jhang Siyal. After wandering alone for some days he reached the bank of the river Chenab, fatigued and worn out. It was sunset; the devout worshippers with folded hands and closed eyelids were bowing in reverence before Zinda-Pir, the water-god, the bargemen were trimming their oil lamps, and the village temples had filled the air with sounds of gongs, bells, and conch-shells; it was an hour of rest and peace, and this Ranjhu need-

ed more than anything else. He looked anxiously for a boat to ferry him across to the other bank, when a beautiful barge approached and greeted his expectant eyes. Decks of silver and lamps of gold, sails of silk and cabins decked with canopies of satin! It was a fairy barge manned by a crew all clothed in white. Ranjhu approached the boatmen reverently, and humbly making his obeisance, persuaded them to let him rest in the boat for a while. But he was soon dragged out of bed; for, hearing of the boatmen's impertinence, Hir had arrived and ordered the immediate expulsion of the bold stranger. Presently her anger vanished, for, at the very sight of Ranjhu, Hir fell madly in love with him and became oblivious of all else. She called Ranjhu to herself, fully apologized for her rudeness, offered her hospitality to him, and finally avowed her love for him. He, in his turn, confessed how he was smitten by her beauty. Yet another case of love at first sight, and subsequent clandestine meetings, which, however, were soon discovered. The result was expulsion for Ranjhu and forced marriage for Hir with one Khero, of Rangpur. Like Suhni, Hir would have nothing to do with her husband. She gave up food and drink, and was always in mourning. Ranjhu, on the other hand, wandered about in the garb of an ascetic, longing for a sight of Hir. Good luck brought him to Rangpur, where he managed to meet Hir, and flee with her, through the good offices of her sister-in-law, Sahiti. They were, however, pursued, brought back and tried before the local Qazi (magistrate), whose verdict was immediate exile for Ranjhu and the compulsory return of Hir to her husband's house. The very day Ranjhu left, the village caught fire, and this misfortune was readily attributed by the simple villagers to Ranjhu's curse. Forthwith messengers were sent to conciliate him, and, when he arrived, Hir was handed over to him by the chief himself. The lovers rejoiced at their good fortune and proceeded to Jhang Siyal, where they were received with feigned courtesy and welcome. Hir's parents asked Ranjhu to go home and return with a wedding procession, as was customary. Meanwhile, in his absence, Hir was informed that Ranjhu was murdered. She fell down senseless, and her bigoted brother, Sultan, gave her a poisoned draught to drink. Poor Hir died,

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but with Ranjhu's name on her lips. When Ranjhu arrived he was informed that a rival, Death, had claimed Hir as his bride. At this Ranjhu was struck as by an arrow, and went raving like a madman to Hir's tomb and fell down dead upon it.

NOTE:- All the tales are interpreted allegorically and have a spiritual significance. The heroines, viz. Sasui, Suhni, Hir and Momal, all standing for the seeker, the Beloved sought after being in each case God.

Selection from Shah's Poems.

Suhni Crossing the Stream

The river is turbulent, so the sea; but far different are the eddies of Love. On the river-bank the lovers sit silent in a corner, agitation-free.

The river-bed is full; the buffaloes dance away in fear; the countenance of Mehar is the ornament of my body. I shall cross the waters. The stream for me is but a stride, for my Loved One waits on the opposite bank.

Comrades, the lashing waves are still ahead, idly you sit at home and form new connections. Sisters, you keep me from my Dear One and call me foolish. If but once you see the face of my Love, you will not hold me. With your jars you will all enter the stream, if but once you see the face of my Love.

If my comrades see what I have seen, they will sacrifice home, hearth, and husband. They will enter the stream, reckless of life, if but once they see the face of my Love.

The village-women flock to the river-bank. Each carries her jar, and, entering the shallows, boasts of sacrifice, saying, 'Behold, I am Suhni in search of my Love.' Morning will find them all at the bottom of the stream.

Hundreds stand on the bank and cry, 'Love, my Love'. Some care for life; others plunge headlong, crying, 'In Love's name'. They will win the Lord who enter renouncing their life.

I see the Buffalo-sheds on the opposite banks. I remember the pledge. The time draws nigh. Shrink not, O pitcher, from the battle of the waves. Take me to the other side lest my buffalo-grazier taunt me, 'Why so late?'.

I steal through the dusk and listen for my Love's voice in the voices of the buffalo-graziers on the opposite bank. I stand watching, with longing in my heart.

Plunge into the waters, sacrifice in Love's name lest it be late, too late, and my buffalo-grazier chide me, 'Why so late?'.

I enter the stream, my only support an earthen jar. Thou, O

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Lord, carry those in safety who have their love-tryst on the other bank.

The light has grown grey in the sky, the rooks have flown back to their nests. Hearing the *muezzin's* twilight call to prayer, Suhni jumps into the waves and seeks the bank where her buffalo-grazer waits.

The jar broke, the girls died, the means were lost. Thereafter did Suhni hear her Mehar's call.

There Is No Pilot Like Love

There is no pilot like Love. Carry not the Self with you; forget all the means. Love will ferry you across the muddy stream. Those will quickly cross the stream who have Love as their pilot.

There is no pilot like Love in the heart. Standing on this bank of the river, the false ones ask for rafts. The river is but a rivulet for those who swim without a raft. O Suhni, from of old, yearning carries the lovers across. No whirlpool check those who seek the Friend.

They who love the Friend, the Friend loves the same. The raft is a burden to those who have intense love in their heart.

Love is the bark for those who long for the Friend. The water becomes land for those who long for the Friend.

The Lover is the same, the Beloved is the same, and so is the stream. All the three are One. This is the profoundest secret of all.

Sincerest friend of all, strongest of all supports, ferry me across to the other bank. The dark whirlpool of the ocean I consider as land. I have cast off all hope of life from my heart. Ferry me across to the other bank.

The sea is stormy, and loud is the roaring of the waves where furious sea-monsters abound. Limitless are the stretching waters and fathomless their depths to the mariners whom ugly sharks and hungry whales surround. Mighty ships and whole argosies vanish in the depths; not a piece, not a plank of them remains.

What is the witchery in that dark whirlpool whence no traveller returns?

There, there, my Lord, help the unwary to cross the stream.

Sorrows Of Sasui

Draw near, O Friend

Draw near, O Friend; do not go in front. Wailing in sandy deserts, the tired one raises her arms. Return to me, Dear One; the cries of pain will kill me. Draw near, O Supreme; go not far, O Husband. Life of my life, return, lest I die in the mountains. Do not, O Punhu, forsake this foot-traveller on the way. Draw near, O Friend; do not wound the afflicted. Enter my house and inquire, lest I die, my Love. Forget me not, my Husband, O Ari*, my God. Remembering you, I wail in longing.

Do not forget me, my Husband; I cannot court patience. I watch for you; come my Love. Draw near, O Friend.

The Heart has no rest

The heart has no rest without the Friend. Love of Punhu has taught me the taste of longing. The heart now has no rest without the Friend. O God, bring those that taught me the taste of longing. The heart has no rest without Punhu. Those are dear to me that taught me the taste of longing.

The Mountain**

Hard are you, O mountain; hard one, you give me hardships. You cut my body as the woodman cuts the tree. It is the urge of Destiny, else who would tread over stones?

O mountain, my first complaint to my Friend shall be, 'The stone broke my feet into atoms.' You tore the soles of my feet. You had no mercy in your soul and no regard for my worth.

Do not injure me, O mountain; I am already afflicted. I remember no happiness, I remember many woes. Meet it is to comfort the bereaved, meet it is to console those whom the Friend has deserted. How can you, O stone, injure the feet of such? Afflicted and aggrieved, I disclosed my secret to you, and, narrating the grief of the Beloved, I died.

* The tribal name of Punhu, the lover of Sasui.

** Throughout the book 'the mountain' is symbolical of the lower self, which serves as an obstacle on the path of the devotee.

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Weep with me, singing the dirges of Punhu. An only friend I had, and he deserted me. Whom shall I blame? I am the victim of Fate.

The afflicted ones come to communicate their sorrows to you. Meet it is to offer consolation to the sorrow-stricken ones. The tears are not dried on the cheeks of the bereaved.

Even the stones of Pab* are broken into atoms. The pangs of pain cut my heart in twain. Afflicted though I am, I shall sacrifice myself for you, who are the Eternal Abode of my Friend.

Even the beasts feel dead hearing the dirges that the destitute one sang on the mountain. What will you do to the afflicted by burning? If you have the stones of Pab, my limbs are made of steel.

From the heights where the mountain meets the sky I watched the footprints of my Love. Thus I remained on the path, beating my breast in vain.

I sit expectant by the wayside. Without my Friend I shall not move from here. Latif says, 'With the mercy of the Merciful, I shall meet my Beloved.'

Wailing, I relate my Fate to my mother. I abandon all bonds and ties with the trees of my native land. Those will roam the mountains that have fire burning in their bosoms.

Friend, do not forsake me at this stage among the mountains. For Allah's sake bring this girl nearer to the caravan.

They left me among the mountains. I was detained by my self.* Those that are misguided by vanity, O Friend, reach your hand to such on their way.

My Plight

If only they saw my helpless plight, O sisters! I cannot climb the peaks, nor reach my goal. Mountains they cast into the lot of this afflicted one. With trees Sasui made vows and pacts. 'If I return bringing my Punhu with me unto every branch I shall give a gift.' They plucked my heart as the root of a wild tree. They bled my heart and turned it red as a pomegranate blossom. Stones from the mountains, these they sent as ornaments to me.

Men on the wayside see me and call me foolish. May He have pity for whom I roam the mountains. I shall weep and dye my gar-

* Name of Mountain.

ments in blood. Sisters, I am wounded with the longing for my Love.

Stretching the arrow from the bow, He struck me with this longing. With this unworthy one, says Latif, the Creator will be merciful.

Remembrance

Today also the eyes have remembered their Friend. Endless are the tear-drops on the cheeks. The longing for the Friend is not satisfied by seeing even the whole world. Some are distant even though near; others are near even though far; some we never remember, others we never forget.

The Friend is ever twined around my heart, and is my only aid. Without a support, without a guide, and entirely unacquainted with the ways, I shed tears of blood for my Husband. Joyously I shed tears in the Hab** for my Friend. I shall reconcile Punhu, my Love, with humility. I shall grind and bake, if you take me with yourself.

Helpless am I without a guide and unacquainted with the ways. There are thieves lurking in the caves and snakes roaming in the desert. Return, O Punhu, lest I die, my Love.

The Master Healer

My condition is known to the beloved, my grief is ancient. I am afflicted with disease for Thee, O Physician. Give me the happiness of health, and remove sorrow, O Dear One. I am wailing my Fate, I who am false and perverse. Thou art the Specialist for this. Mayst Thou come, O marvel. Thou art the cure of the heart; all others I have searched in vain. O God, take Abdul Latif to Thy bosom.

Hope

My loved Friend shall return safely to me that am blind. Taking me to His bosom, He will rest me there. Keeping my cheek on His cheek, He will give me the message of Love. He will take the wash-woman with Him and not leave this orphan alone.

* The lower self.

** The name of a river in Sindh

Realization- The Lord Is Within You

They have their home on the river-bank, but still they are thirsty, the ignorant ones. The Lord is near their life-breath, but they cannot find Him. They know not, and they complain like aggrieved ones.

Leaving Punhu behind, you search him in the mountains. You trouble yourself about Him who is wedded to you. Return and ask those behind the way of Punhu. Seek the loved ones in your heart your whole life.

He is not there where you thought Him to be, O simple ones. Count up and sacrifice all the corners of the houses; do not go and seek far, for He is within.

Leaving other doors aside, ask yourself about Him. He whom you seek is with you. Look within; within yourself is His abode.

Thou art the beloved Prince of my heart, I the slave of Thy slaves. With folded hands I stand for ever in Thy Presence. I shall not leave Thy door even a moment. Do not, O Lord, remove Thy grace from me.

On Humility

Bend low in humility and look, anger is woe. Blessed will you be, if you stand firm on this habit. Bend low in humility and look; anger is a great woe.

All happiness lies in patience, if only you understand. If they rebuke you, fling it not back from your mouth. Verily he is punished who seeks precedence. The man of pride, nought in his lap did he carry. They might answer; do not fling the abuse back. Melt your mind into wax towards all, says Latif. Adopt patience, for no good comes of pride. Though you listen to abuse with your ears, do not return it.

Of the guide's instructions this one is the weightiest: 'They pulled best who killed the passions with patience.' Do not fling back abuse at those that cast it on you. Give daily a previous advice to anger. Never return abuse, then shall you be blessed. Do not revile the non-revilers, and forget the abuse of the revilers. All day long, with reverence, this course you must adopt. With your head betwixt your knees, live in poverty. Entertain the Judgment-

deliverer, that you be not dependent on a Qazi.

The Moth

Ask of the moths news of burning. Fondly they come and jump into the Flame, wounded by spears of Love. Call you yourself a moth? Come, then, and extinguish the Flame. Burning has burnt many; you burn burning itself. Know and cool, disclose not to the world.

Call you yourself a moth? Then fly not from the flame. Jump and be blessed.

The moths made a resolve and gathered round the Flame. They did not shrink back from fire, but burnt themselves on Truth.

The Real Sufi

The sufi washed clear the Leaf of Existence. Thereafter he saw the Lord while living. If you keep the Sufi crown on your head, be a true sufi. Take the poisoned bowl and quaff it brimful. This is the realm of those who realized the Truth.

A Real Yogi

If a real *Yogi* you would be, break all the ties of the world. Attach yourself to those that never were born nor will ever be born. Then will you reach the end of Love's journey.

If a real *Yogi* you would be, then be not like those that are. The Form has lost you (ruined you). You have lost your Form (essence). Blessed is he who has lost his Self.

If a real *Yogi* you would be, sit in silence and attain Unity. Tell the beads in your heart; do not besmear your body with ashes, if a real *Yogi* you would be.

Renouncing all greed, save those that are slaves of slaves, the humblest, lowliest, and the lost. Cut malice and revenge with the sword of Patience. Control your mind, and burn the fire of Love in your heart. Suffer what comes, obedient to His will. Loving your Self, be away from yourself, if a real *Yogi* you would be.

One Word

Read only the word of *Alif*. Forget all the learning of books. Purify your heart. How many books will you read? See whence the

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word has come. The forty fasts-they equal not a sight of the Beloved. If twenty leaves you turn, the same one word remains.

Unity In Diversity

He Himself is the Beloved. He Himself is Perfect Beauty. He Himself is Master and Disciple. He Himself is His Own Thought. He sees Himself. He creates Diversity. And the Seeker of the many too is He.

Call Him not Lover, nor a Beloved either. Call Him not Creator, not created either. From Unity there was Diversity. From Diversity, Unity. The Divine Truth is One. Err not with another speech.

God Is One

Say God is One; learn not another word. Write that True Word in the tablet of your heart. Call Him not a Lover nor a Beloved either. Call Him not Creator nor the created either. Among beasts and birds and peacocks do not err with another word. All the noise and confusion of people is for Allah.

This and that are the same, and so are Death and Allah. The Friend is the same, the Breath is the same, and the same is the Enemy and the Helper.

The same is here, the same is there, and the same pervades in the beast. The same sees Himself by His Own Light. If the secret of Sound you know, the Echo and the Call are the same. They both were one; in hearing alone they became two.

One palace, lakhs of doors, and millions of windows-wherever I look I behold the Lord face to face.

Shah Abdul Latif's Muse*

H. T. Sorley

I have written very fully elsewhere on Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit in a volume of detailed scholarship. This is not the place for any exhaustive commentary on the merits of this great Sindhi poet of the eighteenth century, who lived in the small village of Bhit, which means "sandhill", near the little town of Hala in the Hyderabad district of Lower Sindh. He is a natural poet of sufi leanings, that is to say, he is a poet of Islamic mysticism and his message cannot be fully understood without some idea of what Islamic mysticism is. In the dedication of my book on Shah Abdul Latif, which is to the people of Sindh, I have touched on some of the qualities of Shah Abdul Latif as a poet.

No might is here of Rumi's verse.
No Jami's soul-wrapt music swings.
No high-tuned note of Hafiz's wit.
Within your humble minstrel rings.
And yet! strange paradox it be,
That not less searching is the calm,
The simple music of his lays,
Than wise, deep utterance of Islam.

Shah Abdul Latif after two hundred years-- he died in 1752-- is still the Burns of Sindh, known affectionately to all by familiarity with his verses which are repeated at *mushairas* and broadcast from the Pakistan Radio from time to time. As I have remarked elsewhere

* From *Musa Pervagans*.

'In Sindh his poems are held in such universal and popular esteem as is accorded only to poetry which has successfully interpreted the most intimate thoughts and the sincerest feelings of a people'. In my opinion Shah Abdul Latif is the greatest poet which the country that is now called Pakistan has produced. That he is not the national poet of Pakistan is due to historical and political reasons which are quite divorced from considerations of literary excellence. Another poet is today the "national poet" of Pakistan. But that is another story. Future generations, after national fervour has found its settlement in the full process of time, will have no doubt as to the comparative merits as poets of Shah Abdul Latif and Iqbal. For the moment I am concerned with placing Shah Abdul Latif, or "Shah" as he is affectionately called by Sindhis today, in his place in the procession of the wandering muse through two and a half millennia of waxing and waning moons. To me it seems clear that of all the poets from whose works I am offering translations now "Shah" is the greatest. For this reason I have given a fuller selection from his work than from the achievements of any of the others.

No one can read his poetry without being conscious at once that here is something really great: here is beauty expressed with the utter frankness of sincerity, without conceits, elaborations or pomposity, which are the common faults of all Oriental poets from the time of the great Persians, who are masters of them all. In "Shah" are set forth in sheer simplicity the feelings of reverence, adoration and humility, feelings which are the base of all religion and essential to the highest qualities of poetry. Here there is no clever intellectualism. There could not be. The man was not educated by any standard that would pass muster today. It is doubtful to what extent he was fully literate. Yet these wonderful poems were poured forth without effort and collected and compiled by his followers. For, after the Sindhi fashion of reverence for Sayids, reputed in Sindh to be all descendants from the family of The Prophet, he was accounted a holy man in his own right.

Two great classes of languages have enriched the civilised world, exclusive of the portion of the earth where the Chinese culture has prevailed. These are the Semitic languages and the Aryan languages. In the poetry of Ibn Zaidun we have seen the flowering of the Muslim genius in the heyday of Muslim success, through the majestic language of Arabic. In Ibn Zaidun there is little that can be ascribed to anything but the pure genius of the Semites. With Shah Abdul Latif we witness something different. He wrote seven hundred

years later than Ibn Zaidun and in the India of the Moghul Empire, instead of in Cordovite Spain, then under full Muslim domination, and drawing little from outside the realm of Muslim learning, religion and sensitivity. Sindhi is one of the great Aryan languages of India, like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya and Bengali. But it is a peculiar example of its kind because, owing to the fact that as Sindh was the first conquest of the Muslims in India, three hundred years before the regular invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni which commenced the Muslim conquest of Upper India later extended to almost the whole of the sub-continent except the very extreme south, Sindh has been a Muslim land uninterruptedly since A.D.712. In that year one of the youngest of military conquerors, Muhammad bin Qasim, a youth of nineteen years and a military genius, defeated the ruling dynasty of Brahmans and made himself complete master of the country as far as Multan. The Sindhi language is derived from one of the "outer band" of Prakrits which developed from the break-up of spoken Sanskrit. To understand the process that took place, one must think of Sanskrit as the centre of a big wheel which rayed out in all directions: the local variants of the Sanskrit at the outer edges differing from those nearer the hub. Sindhi was one of the languages that sprang from a Prakrit almost as far away as it could be from the original centre in the heart of Aryavarta in Bihar, and the country of the great Hindu places of worship like Benares, Patna and Muttra. Now this pure Aryan language has, since the Muslim conquest in the early eighth century A.D., been permeated by Arabic and later by Persian elements which over centuries have done to Sindhi what Norman-French and Anglo-Saxon did to English; they formed a compact fully-developed language out of utterly diverse elements. So thorough has been the Arabic penetration of Sindhi that Sindhi alone of all the Aryan languages of India has the pronominal suffixes, which are characteristic of Arabic and Hebrew and have, through Muslim influence in Persia, also become fixed in Persian. Furthermore, in Sindhi, though the language is Aryan, very many indeed of the commonest words used daily are of Arabic and not of Sanskrit origin. So it is that Shah Abdul Latif, writing in Sindhi in the eighteenth century A.D., represents a fusion of Semitic and Aryan language and thought which is unique in the Indian sub-continent. It is doubtless this which explains the extraordinary fact that Sindh Hindus are, or rather were (for most of them have now left Sindh) as great admirers of the mysticism of Shah Abdul Latif as the Muslims are. Indeed much of the literary commentary on "Shah" has

been the work of erudite Hindu writers.

Shah Abdul Latif took the village folk-tales which the mothers sing to their children in their cradles and turned them into subtle psychological poems shot through with the deep intricacies of sufi philosophy, as the colours shine in watered silk. Shah Abdul Latif is a poet in direct line from the master poets of Persia, Jalaluddin Rumi and Jami, that is, he is one of the great poets of the world. Though he uses much of the conventional phraseology of sufi thought he is entirely original in his treatment of his subject matter. His purely religious poems, of which there are several exquisite examples in the "Risalo", can be compared only with the most moving of the mystical Christian hymns. The poem "Live on, O Sweet one, live" or the perfectly lovely poem on "The Joy of Beloved" takes one back at once to the fervours of St. Ambrose, or St. Bernard, or, in modern times, to the ecstatic reverence found in Newman's "Praise to the Holiest in the Height" or Harriet Auber's superb "My blest Redeemer ere he breathed his tender last farewell". This kind of poetry is on a plane altogether higher than that of the clever intellectual who can express subtle thoughts clearly and well, but without the depth of feeling that makes the difference between the ordinary and the sublime. The poems which I have included in this selection give a good idea of Shah Abdul Latif's range, his mystical absorption of a pure Islamic kind, and of his lyrical excellence. To me he is the most worthy poet in the whole of the present selection. His poetry, like all Sindhi verse, is completely lyrical and meant to be intoned or sung, as in fact it always is. The East has not yet divorced poetry from its natural origin in recitative and song. The existence of *mushairas* all over Pakistan today is proof of that fact. If it is questioned, the doubter has only to go to the shrine of the poet at Bhit Shah and hear for himself.

سر ڪنڀات

ڪر ها ڪسر ڇڏ، وڪون وجهه وڌنديون،
هڪر حبیب سان، مون کي نیئي گڏ،
مڇڻ پُونئي هڏ، آهون اڪنديون جون.

ڪر ها ڪسر ڇڏ، وڪ وڌندي پاڻ،
منهنجو هلڻ آهين، جت جانب جي جاء،
تو کي چندن چاريان، پيو وڳ لائي ڪاء،
اٿين اُٺ اُٺاء، جئن هونديءَ رات هت مڙون.

آئي ٻڌم وڻ جاء، ته مان مڪڙيون چري،
ڪڏا تورو ڪر هو، لکيو لائي ڪاء،
ان مڇي سنڌيءَ ماء، مون کي ڳالهين ڳاريو.

چانگي چئي چڪياس، مٿان آڪ نه آهي،
جنهن ول گهڻا وهائيا، اُن سين آر لڳياس،
چوڌاري چندن وڻ، پڇي پوڄ پياس،
رٿاري رت ڪياس، هن ڪڏا توري ڪرهي.

چانگا چندن نه چرين ميا پئين نه موڪ،
اگر اوڏو نه وجين، ٿڪيو ڇڏين ٿوڪ،
لائي وچان لوڪ، ٿو ڪهڙي اڪرائڙي.

THE WAYWARD HEART

O camel, cease thy lingering
And lengthen out thy pace.
This once my loved one bring me nigh.
Then in thine ears there cannot ring
The semblance of a yearning sigh.

O camel, cease to lag behind
And lengthen out thy pace.
This night I have it in my mind
To see my loved's one's face.

For thee I bring the sandalwood.
Let others salt-bush eat.
This very night be thine the mood
To take me where my loved one stood
That there we twain may meet.

The camel, mother, for my needs
I brought and tied beside the tree.
when he on wealth of buds might feast,
He, sneaking on the salt-bush feeds,
The mean and miserable beast,
Undoing all my work for me.

The stupid brute I tell and tell
That in the milkbush there's no zest.
Yon poison bush is many's knell
But hath his silly head obsessed.

Around in plenty for his need
Is repined scrub of sandalwood.
The sulky grumbler pays no heed
And makes me weep my tears in blood.

آٽي اڙائينس، ڇڏيو ته ڇڪ ٿيو،
ڪارايان، ڪڙيو وڃي، پلاٽي پائينس،
ڏاڍن تنهن ڏائينس، جئن چري ۽ چنگهي پڻو.

ڪرهي ڪي ڪئين، وڌم پيند پلڻ جا،
ليڙو لائيءَ ڪي چري، نير سان نئين،
چانگي سندي چت پر، صاحب وجهه سنئين،
اوياهيوس اوهين، لطف سان، لطيف چئي.

And wilt thou thus, O camel, pass
The sandalwood, nor drink thy fill?
Thou seekest not the fragrant grass
But spurnest it as something ill.
It must be thy distorted mood
That made thee find the salt-bush good.

Arise and bind him. Let him free
And he will lose himself and roam.
I feed him and he sulkier gets.
Put on the saddle when he frets.
With shackled feet still growl will he
But will not wander far from home.

To keep him fast I tied him up:
The shackles bound with tug and strain.
The beast has gone with shackles on
To eat the salt-bush once again!
O Lord, into this camel's head
Put something that in sense doth share.
O save him. Lord of Mercy, save:
Such is Latif the poet's prayer.

سر سارنگ

آگيو آهي، لڳهه پس، لطيف چڻي،
وٺو مينهن وڌ ڦڙو، ڪڍو ڏن ڪاهي،
چن چڏي پٽ پڻو، سمر سنباهي،
وهو مَ لاهي، آسرو الله مان.

اگر ڪيا الله، لڳهه پس لطيف چڻي،
پلرجي پالوٽ سين پتن جهليا پاه،
واحد وڌائي ڪيا مٽي گسن گاه،
سانگين وريا ساه، اُنن آب اگوندرو.

اچ پڻ اتر پار ڏي ڪارا ڪڪر ڪيس،
وچون وسڻ آڻيون ڪري لال لبيس،
پرين جي پرديس، سي مون کي مينهن ميڙيا.
اچ پڻ اتر پار ڏي ڪڪر ڪي چوٽي،

From THE SONG OF THE RAIN

See, saith Latif, the sombre cloud
Is lowered and the big-dropped rain
Is fallen. Take your cattle out
And make your way across the plain.
Desert your huts. Your panniers fill
Against the need of coming hours.
It is no time in God-despair
To sit and idle. Lo! it showers!

See, saith Latif, hath Allah brought
The clouds in ever thickening mass.
From brimming pools the waters flow
To make the footing green with grass.
God, One indeed, of gracious thought
Hath clad the paths in verdure: rain
Is come, blithe rain, for them who roam.
Wayfarers draw fresh breath again.

Today too in the northern sky
The clouds are gathered black as hair,
The lightning flashes bring the rain
And choose a crimson cloak to wear.
My friends that dwelt in far off parts
Are by this rain-force drawn to me.
Today too in the northern sky
The clouds to peaks rise toweringly.

مُندائتي مينهن جي ڪوٺ نه ڪوٽي،
آءُ لالڻ موٽي، گهورڻا رسڻ ڏينھڙا.

روضي تان رسول جي ڪيو وڃڻ وارو،
پريائون پيريئي نظر سين نارو،
هاديءَ پر حڪم سين هي تر تا سارو،
نرمل نظارو، پيءُ پسايو پانهنجو.

سارنگ سار لهيج، الله لڳ اُجين جي،
پاڻي پوڄ پتن ۾، آرزان اُن ڪريج،
وطن وسائيج، ته سنگهارن سُڪ ٿئي.

سارنگ سينگاري، وڃون وسڻ آئينون،
مون کي ڪوٺ خوش ڪيو، جا ڪڪر ۾ ڪاري،
جهڙن جهونگاري، لاهر ڪٽ ڦلڻ تان.

The lightning flash of timely rain
Doth not our simple souls bewray.
Come, friend of mine, return to me.
The sulking days are gone for aye.

Across the Holy Prophet's tomb
The lightning streaks did swiftly leap.
They smiled in kindness on the scene
And filled the stream with water deep.

O Guide, send now Thine orders forth
And fill this thirsty watering-place,
The Holy Prophet, best of friends.
Hath showed his abounding grace.
O Lord of Rain, for Allah's sake,
Forget not them whom thirst doth try.
The plains have flood of water. Make
The grain that groweth cheap to buy.

Upon the land pour shower on shower
That happy may the herdsmen be.
The lightnings came to bring the rain.
The black cloud's flash delighted me.
There is the sky the nimbus grew
until its burbling drops did start.
My soul was sad. The Humming rain
Hath cleared the blight from off my heart.

اچ پڻ اڪڙين، سڄڻ پنهنجا ساريا،
ڳلن تان ڳوڙهن جون هوندون بس نه ڪن،
سندي سڪ پرين، لوڪ ڏٺي تان نه لهي.

ماڻهو گهرن مال، آسپ ڏينهن گهران سپرين،
دنيا تنهن دوست تان فدا ڪريان في الحال،
ڪيو نام نهال، مون کي محبوبين جي.

جڏهن پوي ياد صحبت سپرين جي،
فريادون فرياد، ناگهه وڃن نڪريو.

ناز منجهاراڻ نڪري جڏهن پرين ڪري ٿو پنڌ،
پون پڻ بسر الله چئي، راه چمي ٿي رند،
اپيون گهڻي ادب سين وٺي حورون حيرت هڻد،
سائين جو سوڳند، ساجن سڀڻان سُهڻو.

ادمين اخلاص، متائي ماڻو ڪيو،
ڪو نه کائي ڪڏهن سنڌو ماڻهن ماس،
دلبر هن دنيا ۾ وڃي رهندو واس،
پيو سڀ لوڪ لباس، هڪ دل هوندو ڪو هڪڙو.

ڏاتر مون ڏيکارو هوتن جو حضور،
پرين پريچڻ جو ڪيو موتائي مڌڪور،
اي دوستن دستور، جڻن چنان چنن ڪينڪي.

THE JOY OF BELOVED

Today my poor eyes have remembered my friends
And the dropping of tears
Doth not cease from my cheeks. At the sight of loved ones
My desire doth not die.

Mankind covets wealth. But all the day long
Covet I Belov'd.
I renounce the whole world for the sake of that Friend
Whose name made me glad.

When the memory comes of the love of that Friend
Sudden cries burst on cries.

In gracious emergence when walks the Belov'd
E'en earth itself sings:
"In God's name!" and lo! on the tracks of his feet
Are the road's kisses planted.

The hours astonished stand by in respect.
I swear by the Lord,
The face of Beloved's most lovely of all.

It's the way of the world
To alter love's virtue and change it to dross.
No one ever eats
The flesh of mankind. In this world will be left
Only fragrant delight.

All the rest of mankind wear but friendship's false cloak:
Only one or two are
Who are one with our heart. O Giver, vouchsafe
That friends present be.

On the tongues of my friends there is mention once more
That we're reconciled.
My friends have this way that, break I with them,
They break not with me.

پيشانيءَ ۾ پرين جي پلائيءَ جا پير،
اڳڻ اڪنڊين جي ڏي پاڻو هي پير،
قمر پاڙي ڪير، شمس سپرين سين؟

اڄ پڻ اچائي چوڏهين ماه چنڊ جي،
مون گهر مون پرين جي اچڻ جي وائي،
مون گهر واڌائي، پيئي ڪام ڪرن ۾.

سهين سجن اڀري، چوراسي چنڊن،
بالله ريءَ پرين، سڀ اونڌاهي پانيان.

چنڊ تنهنجي ذات، پاڙيان نه پرين سين.
تون اچو ۾ رات، سڄڻ نت سوجهرا.

ناسيندي نگاهه، پهرين ڪڇ پرين ڏي،
احوال عاجزن جا، اکڇ لڳ آله،
روز نهارين راه، اڪيون اوهان جي آسري.

BELOVED'S BEAUTY

On the forehead of my belov'd are set signs that are kind for
me.
With a smile he comes to my courtyard where I long for him,
mine own.
Who claims that the moon with the sun of Belov'd can ever
the equal be,
Though the moon to a white perfection on the fourteenth
day be grown?
In my house there are folk a-talking of Beloved at the door.
In my house are happy welcomings-the jealous jealous be.
And yet, were a thousand suns to rise and moons fourscore
and four.
In the name of Allah, without my love I should nothing but
darkness see.
O Moon, such a paltry thing as thou art, would I ever
compare with the Friend?
His splendour gleameth for ever: and lo! only at night thou
art bright.
At the hour of thy morning's uprising first thy glance on
Beloved bend.
For Allah's sake, speak thus in his ear of our-love-sick sorrow-
ful plight:
"Beloved! on thee are our trusting eyes set every day without
end."

جانب شال جيئن، تنهنجو ڪنهن مدور سٿيان،
اڪن ۽ هنئين، پنهي تات تنهنجي.

جانب جيئن شال تنهنجو ڪنهن مدور سٿيان،
جنهن تو اچي ڪالهر، نالائق نوازيا.

عربي، جهڙو آڙ نه ڏسان ڪو ڏسن ڇر،
مهڙ مڙني مرسلين، سـرس سندس شان،
فڪان قاب قوسين اوداني، اي ميسر ٿيس مڪان،
اڳي جو احسان، جنهن هادي ميڙير ههڙو.

جيئس ڪونه جهان ۾ سنڌ سورت هند هاڻ،
در دانا مڱ مڱا، حال ڏسي پال ڪري.

THE GUIDE

Live on, O Sweet One, live.
May mine ears never hear
An evil word of Thee.
Brought each to other near
Mine eyes and heart combine
To speak of Thee and Thine.

Live on, O Sweet One, live.
May mine ears never hear
An evil word of Thee,
Of Thee who didst appear
But yesterday to grace
My soul's unworthiness.

Like Him who Arab was
No one, nowhere I see.
In full forefront He stands
Where the Apostles be:
And He hath pride of place
In majesty and grace.

"Near, nearer came to Him
The Angel of the Lord
Than two bow's distance is"
Thus saith the Holy Word.
Lo! this is the abode
In Heaven on Him bestowed.

Almighty God be praised
Who brought me such a Guide.
His like the world knows none,
Nor Sindh nor Surat side:
Nor anywhere on earth
Hath knowledge of such worth.

جو ملن کي مهڻو، سوئي مون سردار،
پٺيءَ لائي پنهنجا ساقي ٿيو سوار،
آهي اسد الله جو اسان کي آڌار،
جابر ذوالفقار، هر دم آهي هٿ ڀر.

جهڙ تنهنجي جهپيا، هزارين حاتم،
ڪو جهن سندا ڪر، تو ڪامل ريءَ ڪير ڪري.

H. T. Sorley

O Beggar, go and beg
Before the Giver's door.
Seek favour of none else.
Gifts He himself doth pour.
He sees men's state and gives
Them mercy in their lives.

My Lord and Master puts
The Mullahs to their shame.
His horsemen set behind,
To head the host He came.
The Lion of the Lord
To us doth help afford.

For ever in His hand
He bears the mighty sword
That cleaves backbones of foes.
His bounty's rich accord
A thousand *Hatim's* store
Hath darkened and made poor.

Without Thee, Perfect One, who can
Help, succour give to helpless man?

سُر سارنگ مان

مند ٿي منڊل وڃيا، تـاڙي ڪي تنوار،
هارن هر نـسـبـا هـيا، سرها ٿيا سنگهار،
اڄ پڻ منهنجي يار، وسڻ جا ويس ڪيا.

مند ٿي منڊل وڃيا او جهڙ جهاتي،
هڪ ارزان ان ٿيو پيد مڪڻ منجهه ماتي،
ڪلمي سين ڪاتي، لائمر ڪٽ قلوب تان.

مند ٿي منڊل وڃيا، موٽي آيو مينهن،
لعل پرين لڪير چڻي، ساري سارو ڏينهن،
جن سين نيئن لايو نينهن، سي پرين پيهي گهر آڻيا

From THE SONG OF THE RAIN

The season's here:
Glad converse and sweet music sound.
Shrills cuckoo clear:
The ploughmen fit their ploughshares for the ground.
Herdsmen are happy. Yea! his fine array
For joyous rain my friend has donned today.

The season's here:
Glad converse and sweet music are:
Mass-clouds appear:
The corn is cheap. There's butter in the jar.
I spake the Word of God and by its art
Cast out the rust that overlay my heart.

The season's here:
Glad converse runs: sweet music rings:
Rain's back to cheer.
Daylong I thought of friends, (so Lakhmīr sings).
My friends for whom these eyes of love did pine
Have hither come and sought this house of mine.

سسئي ۽ پنهنون مان

ڪهڻ ته ڪچائي، سور سانڍڻ نه سٿرا،
اڃا نه آئي، ڏيڍل منهنجي ڏک سين.

جيئن سو تڻي ترو، ڪامي ڪوري وڃ ۾،
موڪي ڏنو سڄڻين منجهان سڪ سرو،
ور جهيٽو اي ٻرو، مڇ ڦوڙائو سڄڻين.

اڀرڻ انگور، ستي سڀيرين جا،
ڪايو ڪايو سور، لڇيو لوڇيو اٿيان.

جاء نه سڄو ڏينهن، هنيڙو اولي وڳ جان،
مون پريان جو نينهن، چنڻ ڪارڻ نه ڪيو.
ڪڪر منجهه ڪپار، جهڙ نيڻين نه لهي،

اڃ به منهنجي من ۾، انا پرين آڀار
آاسجن لهه سار، وره ويڙهي آهيان.

H. T. Sorley

From SASUI AND PUNHU

It is not right to tell one's woe
 And yet it is not easy
To keep one's sorrow. Even so
Within my heart with twisting pain
Unfittingness now comes again.

Somehow or other in the kiln
 The vessel's nether rim is baking.
A sip of wine from love's own still
I had from friends: but better far
Low fevers than non-union are.

I slept and there within me grew
 The branching of my loved ones vine.
For food-pain, sorrow's pain, I knew.
I writhe and struggle in my grief
which stoppeth not to bring relief.

All day my heart is out of place
 As strays the herd of camels far.
I loved no love to love displace.
My head is cloudy: from mine eyes
The misty fogbanks do not rise.

Within my heart hath rained today
 The plenteous showering of my love.
Beloved, come and carefully
Look after me. For I am wrapped
In separation and entrapped.

سسئي ۽ پنھون مان

وڳر ويا وهي ڪالهه تنهنجا ڪونجڙي،
ڪندين ڪوهه وهي سر ۾ سپرين ري؟

وڳر ڪيو تن، ڀرت نه چنن پاڻ ۾،
پسوپڪيڙن، ماڻهن ۾ مٿي گهڙو.

وڏي وڳر هيرڙين، چڙهي نه ٻين گڏ،
ڪونج ڪريندي سڏ، ويهي وهامي راتڙي.

قسمت آنديون ڪو نجهڙيون، وطن سندن روه،
ڪنهنجو ڪو نه هي ڏوه، رزق رازق هٿ ۾.

وڳر ۾ وائي، ڪالهه تنهنجي ڪونجڙي،
سر ۾ سارينبي، گهڙو پير ۽ پٺائي،
پسي نه ڦاهي، جا ماري سندي هٿ ۾.

From SASUI AND PUNHU

O little crane, the flocking cranes
But yesterday did wing their way.
Within the marsh without thy friends
What wilt thou gain by longer stay?

The cranes fly off in gathered flight:
Their bonds of love they do not sever.
For lo! within the gathered wisp
For them aboundeth sweetness ever.

The little crane is wont to be
Where'er of cranes the flocking throng is:
From her own kind to feed apart
Against the crane-clan's law a wrong is.
O little crane, send forth thy call.
The night hath sped: the night-is speeded.

Fate hither brought the wandering cranes.
It was their mountain land they needed.
No blame to any! Food will be
In the Provider's hand for thee.

O little crane, within the wisp
There was a talking yesterday.
In swamp thy brethren, sisters keep
Of thee a goodly memory.
Alas! thou dost not see the net
That in the fowler's hand is set.

سُر آسا مان

مونڪي اڪڙين، وڏا ٿورا لائيا،
ته پڻ پرين پسن، کٿان جي ڪر سامهون.

اڪڙيون پرين ري جي ڪي ٻيو پسن
ته ڪڍي ڪي ڪانگن، نيو الائيڻ ڏيان.

تن نيٺن ڪئي نيران، جن ساجر سيڻ سانپيٽيا،
جي جي ۽ جان، ڪر حضوري حج ڪيو.

ڏسن ڏهاڙي، توه تـرسـن اوڏهين،
آيا سڃاڻي، نيٺ نهاري پرين ڪي.

اڪين ڪي آهين، عجب جهڙين عادتون،
سور پرائي ساڻ جا وڃيو وهائين،
اُتي لٿو لائين، جت حاجت نام هٿيار جي.

THESE PALTRY EYES OF MINE

These paltry eyes of mine
Have brought me favour's grace.
If evil but before them be,
They see Love in its place.

If paltry eyes of mine
Did aught but Love disclose
I'd pluck them out to cast
As morsels for the crows.

Mine eyes have made a feast
Where kin and friends engage.
It is as if life, body, soul
Had gone on pilgrimage.

All day they look and yet
They halt out there to see.
They saw and recognized Love
And have returned to me.

Strange habits have mine eyes
To trade With others' pain.
Love's conquest they have made
Where weapon brings no gain.

سُر سريراگ مان

سيئي سبھان جي ڪر حوالي ڪر،
تي تحقيق تسليم ۾ لاهي غم وهر،
ته قادر ساڻ ڪرم، حاصل ڪري حاج تو.

چڱن سان چڱايون ايئن سڀڪو هو،
تو جئن ڪري نه ڪو، ٻچن سان پلائيون.

چڱا ڪن چڱايون مٺايون مٺن،
سي وڙ سيئي ڪن، جي وڙ جڙن جن سين.

وياسي وينجهار، هيرو لعل وندين جي،
تنهين سندا پوڻيان سبهي لهن نه سار،
ڪٽين ڪٽ لهار، هاڻي انهن پيڻين.

اڳهڙو ڪاڻو ڪڇ، ماڻڪن موت تي،
پليءَ پاڻو سڇ، آڇيندين لڇ مران.

جتي ماڻڪ ماڳ، تني چوران تڪيو،
سئون تن سڀاڳ، آمل جن اباھيو.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

O all thy works to God commit,
To God on whom there falleth praise.
In meek submission being true
From tribulation free thy days.
With mercy then the Mighty Lord
Will fashion what thy heart essays.

Among good folk to do good deeds
Is surely everybody's plan.
Thou dost good deeds amongst the bad.
Is there like thee another man?

Good deeds are by good people done.
Ill deeds are with the wicked found.
They works of goodness do perform
Whom good with fitting grace hath crowned.

The lapidaries now are gone
Who diamond pierced and ruby red.
But they who followed after them
Have not the skill to work in lead.
Where craftsmen wrought of yore, the smiths
Beat worthless pewter now instead.

The taste is all for tawdry trash,
When pearls are given in change away.
If I offered truth in garment's hem
Of very shame I'd die today.

Where'er today the pearls are found
There now, alas, the thieves abide.
Good honest luck is theirs today
who laid their precious gems aside.

سامونڊي مان

ڳريو جهليو رو، مٿي مهري هٿڙا،
گه سوڌو سندو، جو تون ڏوليا سڪيو.

الوڙ نه ڏئي، وروڌائين ونججهه ڪي،
ره اڇوڪي راتڙي لالڻ مون لائي،
وڃ مڙوڙائي، ايڏي سفر سپرين.

جيڪس نهرينهن سندو، جئن مون بيٺي هن ٿيلهيو،
سعيو سامونڊين سين اڳهين تان نه ڪيوم،
وجهن منجهه هٿو، پاڻ وراڪي رس سڃيئن.

تن جنهن جي تانگهه، سي سڄڻ سفر هليا،
لڻج لات لطيف چئي ڪڏهن ايندم ڪانگ،
ڪنهن سٺائي سانگ، پرين پرڏيهي ڪيا.

سرن سڙيا پاند، اتر لڳا آءُ پرين،
مون تو ڪارڻ ڪانڌ، سهين سڪائون ڪيون.

جيڪر اچي هاڻ ته ڪريان روح رچنديون،
آيل، ڏولي سان، هوند ڳر لڳي ڳالهيون ڪريان.

From THE SAILING

Love pierced my soul and he fell to tears
 When he set his hands on the Vrow.
This commerce that thou hast learned, O Friend,
 Have thou no truck with it now.

Love leueth me not the rope untie,
 But graspeth the very spar.
This night, O Friend, for me remain:
Go not, Beloved, to part us twain
 In thy seeking to fare so far.

Surely my melting soul is nought,
 For while I stood on the strand,
Love came himself, the cable sought
 And pushed the boat from the land.
Of Sailors I knew no useful lore;
 Else then had my body's strength,
While the boat was standing there by the shore,
 Been twined in the cable length.

For friends who set on their journey forth
 My body doth live in pain.
O tell me in happy notes, O Crow,
 When will they hither again?
'Twas some powerful cause that banished my friends
 In an exile over the main.

O come, Beloved, the tips of the sedge
 Have been seared by the wind from the north.
For thee, O Master of mine, my mouth
 Thousands of vows sent forth.

If thou would'st come to me now, my love,
 Full joy to my soul I'd impart.
If, mother, mayhap, may lover should come,
I'd cling to him, cleave to him, here in my home
 And speak out the word of my heart.

يمن ڪلياڻ مان

آءُ سين ان پار، ڪڏهن تان ڪونه پيو،
”ان الله و تريحب الوتر“ نيئي پيا ئي پار،
هيڪڙائي وٽ وهار، هنجئون جي هٿن جون.

جان جان پسين پاڻ کي تان تان ناه سجود،
وڃائي وجود، تهاڻ پوءِ تڪبير چو.

نابودي نيئي، عبد کي اعليٰ ڪيو،
مورت ۾ مخفي ٿيا، صورت پڻ سيئي،
کبي اٽ ڪيهي، ڳالهه پريان جي ڳجهه جي.

ONE-NESS

Across life's ocean no one yet
With "I" as guide his foot hath set.
 God indeed who is one
 Adoreth one-ness alone.
Take Two-ness off to burn with fire.
Existence may man's tears require.
 This weeping should be done
 Before One-ness alone.

On self alone while eyes be set
No truth of worship can'st thou get.
 First kill all life's emprise:
 Say Word of Sacrifice.

What-no-existence knows hath grace
To raise the slave to lofty place.
 Who secret are in heart
 Are secret in outward part.
Here how can mystery be told
Which the Beloved doth enfold?

مومل راڻي مان

شمع ٻاريندي شب، پرہ باڪون ڪڍيون،
موت مران ٿي ميندرا، راڻا ڪارڻ رب،
تنهنجي تات طلب، ٿي ڪانگ اڏايان ڪاڪ جا.

اُٻي اُٻاريام، نڪت سڀ نئي ويا،
هڪ ميو ٻيو ميندرو، سڄي رات ساريام،
ڳوڙها ڳل ڳاڙيام، سورج شاخون ڪڍيون.

ڪٽين ڪر موڙيا، ٿيڙو اُٻا ٿيئي،
راڻو رات نه آيو، ويئي ويل ٿيئي،
ڪُھ سا ڪاڻي راتڙي، جا پرين ري پيئي،
مون ڪي ڏنءِ ڏيئي، ڏوليو ڏت ڦراريو.

رُس مَ، رُسڻ گھوڙيو، پرچ، مَ وٺڻ پري،
ماريس ڦٽ فراق جي ۽ جھت جي ڌري،
لالن جي، لطيف چئي، شل مون سونهائي سري،
ايس توڳري، ته سوڍا سڳائي ٿيان.

From MOMAL AND RANO

Lo! dawn has burnt the lamp of night
And set day's first streaks in the sky.
Come back, *O Mindhro* prince, I pray.
For Allah's sake, come back, I die.
In search of you I sent the crows
Of *Kak* upon their way to fly.

I stood, the constellations rose,
And all the constellations set.
The camel and the *Mindhro* prince
Did all night long my memory fret:
Adown my cheeks the tears I shed
Till branch in branch of sunlight met.

There waned the Pleiades and waxed
The three stars in Orion's belt.
The prince at night-time did not come.
Time passed away for night to melt
In fiery pit without my love.
In *Dhat* stayed *Dholio*: Grief I felt.

Don't sulk! Away with sulking! Come:
Make up our quarrel, nor go far.
The wound of separation smarts
And brings some little pang to mar.
May my love guide me. I'm come near
You. I find gladness where you are.

سهڻي ميهار مان

اڏيون سڀ اندام، منهنجا چرن چوريا،
لارن جا لنوءَ لائي سا ڪيئن آڇا عام،
لڳيس جنهنجي لام، سو دوست دلاسا مُنجي.

ڪڙڪن خوش ڪياس، محبتي ميهار جي،
پسڻ ڪارڻ پرين جي آڏي ٿي اُٿياس،
ستي جاڳياس، سانپر سپرين جي.

جيساريس سنپار، ڪوه ڪريندم گڏجي؟
وير وتار وجود ۾ پرين جي پچار،
سي سڄڻ هئن نه ڌار، جي هنيڙي ۾ حل ٿيا.

هن پر سُڀر هوءَ، ستي سنپارن جي،
چت چڙن چوريو، ذوق ٿيڙم جو،
محبتي ميهار جي ٻالڻه پير پوءِ،
وڃي روبروءِ، ديڪيان دوست ميهار ڪي.

هن پر سُڀر هاڪ، ستي سنپارن جي،
محبتي ميهار جي چڙن چوريو چاڪ،

H. T. Sorley

From SUHNI AND MEHAR

O sisters! how the tinkling bell
Has set my limbs to sprightly dance.
To stranger folks how may I tell
The love that doth my heart entrance?

With arrow that hath pierced my heart
My herdsman lover sends me joy.
The bells that make my senses start
In gladness do my soul employ.

At midnight's hour I did uprise
That I might my beloved see.
I slept: but shook sleep from mine eyes
When the bell-tinklings came to me.

My quickened pulses livelier beat
As on his memory mind did rest.
"How will he treat me when we meet?"
So sought the heart within my breast.

My thoughts are always with my love
While life still holds me: and may they
Whose molten hearts in mind do move
Be sundered from me ne'er away.

I slept and heard the sound of bells
That tinkled on the farther strand.
They moved my heart. Delight now dwells
Within me for this gladsome land.

By Allah's favour came to me
Beloved's fragrance in this place.
Lo! I will go that I may see
The much loved herdsman face to face.

I slept and heard the sound of bells
Vibrating on the further shore.
My heart the herdsman's message tells
And sets my nerves a-tingle more.

انهن جي اوطاق، وڃڻ واجب مون پيو.

مري تان مَ مهار، وٽان ولهو مَ ٿئي،
وڃن جي وڃار جو شل ونگو ٿي مَ وارا
ساهڙ مون سينگار، ماڻهن ليکي مهڻون.

سڪ تنهنجي سپرين، جئن تران ٿئن تار،
تون رهين روح ۾، تونهن اڳڻان بهار،
پرين تنهنجي پار، مونکي واجهائيندي روه ٿا.

سڪ تنهنجي سپرين ڪڍي ۽ ڪوري،
سگهان نه چوري، ڏاڍو نير نينهن جو.

سڪ تنهنجي سپرين اندر ٿي اجهل،
هڙڪڻو ٻاهر نڪري، ڪوري ڪانڌي ڪل،
ره سيراڻيءَ مل، مونکي وڏا سڄڻين.

سڪ سکندين لاءِ، وڃوڙا ميوڙ پرين،
ايڏي سگهه سڄا ڏئي توکي هي آه،
تن جنهن جو طالبو، مهر تنهن کي پاء،
ميڙائي جو، ماء، کان لوندو ڪڏهن؟

Oh! It is right that I should go
Where my beloved rests his head.
That herdsman die? Ah no: ah no!
Nor empty be his cattlestead.

Young buffaloes he guardeth . Oh!
May harm not reach one hair of his.
He is mine ornament although
Men may revile with calumnies.

Outside art thou of mine eyes,
Yet dwellest within my soul.
While I yearned for thee, love, my love,
The tide of the years did roll.

Beloved, my love for thee,
Chafeth and cutteth my heart.
Strong bonds that thy love hath bound
I cannot sunder apart.

Beloved, I yearn for thee.
From the love doth my weakness cower.
From the kiln of my worthless skin
Love mounteth in blazing power.

The friends who have pierced me through
Needed not the gimlet's bite.
From yearners the yearning take, O love,
And the severed souls unite.

For such is that strength of thine
Who art both true and lord.
To her who maketh the body's quest
Do thou thy mercy afford.

ڏٺي ٿي ڏينهن، ڪُھ ڄاڻان ڪهڙا پرين،
نٻڻ ڀرجي نينهن، پلٽيا پار يون ڪري.

ڏٺي ڏينهن ٿام، ڪُھ ڄاڻان ڪهڙا پرين،
سهيڻ سڄ آهي واجهائيندي وٿام،
تن ري سال پٿام، جن ري ساعت نه سهان.

گهر، نه ور، نه وٽ ڪا، آهر من مهار،
ان اوسيري اٿيان سنجھي ڪري سينگار،
پرين تنهنجو پار، پسان مان پر ڪنهن.

Of the trysting when will the crow,
Mother, glad notes give forth?
Time is old since I saw my Friends.
How shall I judge their worth?

I yearned. Set a thousand suns.
Bereft the years I did spend,
Thought I cannot suffer a moment's loss,
Of folk that I count as friend.

I think not of home nor spouse.
Nought else my senses thrills.
But the herdsman alone for me
The living moment fills.

I deck my beauty betimes,
Hoping Beloved to see.
He dwelleth across the stream.
May he somehow appear to me!

Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif

A. K. Brohi

So much of Shah Latif's thought and its expression surrounds the life of an average Sindhi that it is impossible for him to avoid being deeply influenced by it and so far as I am concerned his poetry appears to have gone in me with my mother's milk. Whenever any one sings a simple *kafi* from Shah Sahib's poetry he provides for me a sort of aesthetic delight which I do not experience even by listening to the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. All that Latif has said in his poetry has become a part of my life and it is not possible therefore to expect that I could be objective in my appraisal of his message.

Frankly, then mine is the viewpoint of a lover of Latif's poetry and it is as well that you should know this before you can sympathetically enter into spirit of what I am going to say to you about him.

The main characteristic of Latif's poetry to my way of thought is, that it is remarkable record of a God-intoxicated man's longing to rise beyond his level of life in order to meet his maker. Latif is essentially a poet of love and longing. He has sung as nobody that I know of, has sung either before or after him to his longing to respond to call of universal life. He is never weary of emphasising the need of obeying this call.

Nobody has portrayed so effectively as he has the experience of a man of devotion who is in search of God. Not a line of his poetry but reflects his testimony that the primary purpose of our life here

below is to acknowledge the truth which, in the words of the Holy Quran, is "we are from God and to Him is our return."

In one of his Surs entitled "Marui and Umar", he has presented to us what might be described as the autobiography of the spirit. There is nothing in sheer beauty and sublimity of poetical expression or in the depth of insight in matters spiritual comparable with "Marui and Umar" anywhere in the total range of world poetry. Latif, like Shakespeare and Goethe, takes up ordinary tales that were known to the people of his day and renders them in glorious verse and employs them as instruments for the purpose of revealing the hidden side of our life's beauty and power.

How did this remarkable man succeed in accomplishing all this, is a question I have often asked of myself. I must confess that I have not, as yet, found a satisfactory answer to it. That such a man should have emerged in the eighteenth century life of Sindh, is by itself a remarkable fact indeed. He has not articulated the deepest aspirations of the soul of Sindh but has successfully become the mouthpiece of its destiny. Neither in the Sindhi language of his day nor in the cultural formations which constituted his mental environment was there anything to have brought about the growth of a poet of his dimensions. He speaks from heights hitherto unscaled by the mere mortals and if he owes any debt to any book or man, it is only to the Quran and to Muhammad (God's peace be on him) for verily more than anything else he is the commentator of all that Quran teaches or Islam stands for. At numerous place in his *Risalo* you would come by lines from the Holy Quran wonderfully dovetailed as integral parts of the poet's verses and what is more, you would find that the lines that he quotes from the Quran in the context of his verse begin to glow with a meaning and significance you could have hardly sensed before.

It must be clearly understood that Latif is not a poet in the conventional sense of that term: he never wrote poetry. His method of expression is more direct. All that you discover in his *Risalo* was sung in the presence of his devoted disciples and those distant admirers of his, who used to collect at the Bhit from diverse parts of Sindh, just to listen to his song, to be ennobled and uplifted by it.

The question has often been debated as to how far such poetry

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as is believed to have fallen from his lips could be regarded as an authentic record of what the poet himself uttered or may be taken even roughly to represent what he had himself felt and found. For, in accordance with the practice of the day when he would sit surrounded by a band of disciples to sing the songs of devotion. There would be his coadjutors who would also join in the chorus occasionally and sometimes it would be they who would take the initiative of adding a verse or so in order to add to the richness of the thought which would further augment the meaning of what the master was attempting to convey.

The biographers of the poet are generally agreed that the poet lived from 1690 to 1751 although the historic evidence bearing on this question of dates is not beyond challenge. According to Dr. H.T. Sorley, the famous author of "Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit": "as a young man the poet must have seen the Kalhora dynasty rise to power" and his death seems to have coincided with the establishment of the Second East India Company's Factory at Thatta. These dates and events are relevant in so far as the question of the authenticity of his verses is concerned, because the first text, and that too in an incomplete form, was for the first time published by Ernest Trumpp in Leipzig in 1866 that is, 115 years after the death of the poet. I will not, therefore, indulge in what I consider is after all a profitless pursuit of having to determine by an appeal to those well-known intrinsic tests that have been formulated by the biographers of the poet, what portions if any, out of the total output of the poetical work attributed to him, are really authentic. Suffice it to say that, there have been versifiers who, whatever their motive or justification, were guilty of adulterating the text of his poetry.

What is from my point of view essential at the present moment, is to make an effort to penetrate deep down into the meaning and significance of some of the poet's verses in order that some idea of the richness and depth of his poetry is conveyed to my readers.

To begin with as I have hinted a little earlier, Latif himself regarded his poetry as being in some sense an interpretation of the message of the Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace) the message that has been conveyed to and preserved for us in the Holy Quran. 'Whatever verses I have sung', says he, 'are but Ayats-Ayats in precisely the sense in which we use the term in relation to the text

of the Quran-for these verses have the tendency in them of directing the soul of man to that region where the Beloved abides.' As the readers of Shah's Risalo know, his poetry is full of quotations in Arabic from the Holy Quran and these have been inwoven and inwrought as parts of the poetical Sindhi text itself. For instance, the Sur of "Marui and Umar" begins with the query and an answer to that query - in Arabic from the Quran:

"Am I not your Lord?"

And the answer was:

"Indeed Thou Art so."

A considerable bulk of the poetry of Shah is taken up with the praise of the Almighty Lord, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Take the well-known verse with which the Risalo of Shah begins:

In the beginning Allah is,
Who knowweth All, who sits aloft,
The Lord of all the world that be,
He is the Mighty, Old of Days,
Of His Own Power Established.
He is the Lord, One, only One,
Sustainer and Compassionate.
Sing ye the praise of Him who heals,
The True One' sing ye praise of Him,
He is the One, who hath no Peer.
Confess ye this. In heart of heart
Acknowledge ye the Praised One, who
The Causer of the Causes is.
Why go ye then and bow yourselves
In front of others, why go ye?
Men were who said: "He is the one, Without a Peer"
in heart of heart
Acknowledging the Praised One, who
The Causer of Causes is.
Such men did from the righteous path
Set not an erring foot astray.
Men are whom God the One hath cut out

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Whose bodies He Hath cut in Twain.
Who having seen the several parts,
Doth not for self, unfortunate,
Desire like theirs the severance?
God who is One, no rival hath.
Herein of Him in the Oneness is,
And Righteousness of Truth. But who
Embraced false Two-ness lost indeed
The savour and the salt of life.

The unity of God, His unrivalled greatness and power are a never-ending refrain of all his poetry.

Much of his poetry, however, is allegorical. He takes up as I have said, ordinary stories that were current in his days. The stories were about the love affairs of the peasants and rustics. Stories like 'Suhni-Mchar', 'Umar-Marui', 'Sasui-Punhu' and 'Lilan-Chancesar' and uses the characters and main details in those stories as mere symbols and articulates through them, allegorically, those deeper mystical aspects of the spiritual life of Man which constitute the essential part of all Higher Poetry, perennial philosophy and universal religion.

Take the treatment, he accords to the tale of Umar and Marui: we have here a simple tale totally transformed in the hands of the poet into a 'symbol'. He employs forth that message of hope and uses it merely as a means for setting promise for that reunion of Man with God of which the Holy Book speaks:

O'Verily the man is skirting a difficult path to his Maker
But he will meet Him.

Marui was graceful girl born of humble parents in the family of the goat-herds of Sindh. They were simple folk who used to live their life by tending their goats and living on herbs, roots and fruits that countryside vegetation yielded to them. This girl was betrothed to a person called Khet who was her kinsman.

This infuriated one Phog who had been for sometime in the the past, pressing his suit for the hand of this beautiful girl from her parents. Being thus disappointed in love, he informed Umar who was the chieftain of the place, about the beauty of this girl. He praised her beauty so much that Umar became somehow curious to

see this rustic girl to be able to decide for himself whether or not she was really so beautiful as to deserve the praise that was being vouchsafed on her by Phog.

Prince Umar, accompanied by Phog, went incognito to Malir where the home of Marui was. He saw this girl near the well, where she had gone, as was the custom of the day, to fill jars of water. Having seen her, he fell in love with her. He approached her and falsely represented that he was dying of thirst. He asked for water being supplied to him and while she proceeded to give him water for drink, he forcibly caught hold of her, put her on the camel's back and brought her to his palace in Umarkot.

Thus was Marui taken away from her people in these strange circumstances. Umar did his best to persuade her to offer herself to him in marriage but she refused. He offered her all the comfort, happiness and prosperity which life in a kingly palace could promise, but she each time denounced all these inducements as corrupt temptations and declared her loyalty and devotion to her own people and asked Umar to restore her to her own people. It is said that Umar pressed his claim on her for a month or so but Marui stuck to her ground and was so steadfast that at last Umar declared her free from bondage and allowed her to go to her own people.

This simple story of an ordinary rustic girl from Sindh has been taken up by Latif for the narration of the events connected with this story: for instance, the circumstances and the manner in which Marui had been forcibly taken away from her people to the palace of Umar and how she had to be restored back to her people by Umar himself are not adverted to in any detail in the poem. Latif assumes that the hearer knows the story and in fact, he would have been completely indifferent to the whole question even if he could have been convinced of the fact that his listeners did not know the details of the story. He uses the tale as an allegory, pure and simple and each one of his verses is so very self-contained that no external reference is at all necessary for the comprehension of the meaning that is enshrined in it.

I will take up only one idea out of the numerous that are to be found in those verses that have been subsumed by the later commentators of Latif's poetry under the heading: "Umar and Marui" just to

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illustrate the depth of philosophical insight that inspires his utterances.

The most outstanding question which has engaged the attention of philosophers and mystics down the ages is to account for the very purpose of Creation of Man and to suggest an answer to the question as to why it was at all felt necessary that the soul of man be made to undergo all those experiences which its career on his planet necessarily entails? If 'we are from Him and to Him is our return,' why was it necessary for the intervening process of separation to take place? What purpose was to be served as a result of this temporary disunion? Marui on her return from the Kote of Umar raises this very question herself. Why was it at all necessary, she begins to muse, for Destiny to have brought about her separation from her people? Why was it at all necessary that she had to undergo that period of strain and suffering and suffer from the feeling of loneliness that haunted her when she lived her days in the Kote of Umar? Why for all that long period she was to be kept away from her own people and in particular, from Khet to whom she was betrothed and to whom she rightly belonged?

In one of most remarkable passages in the poetry of Latif, one comes across the following lines in which the poet raises not only this question but also indicates the answer. Marui is made to say:

How auspicious were the days, that I spent in bondage;
How often did I not weep away my time the while
I stood over the roof of the Kote of Omar;
Was I not broken to pieces the while I was longing for
union?

It is thanks to the chains of the bondage
and my longing to be free;
That I am so pure today.

The poet's teaching is that this life is an opportunity given to man to cleanse himself, to purify himself. It may be recalled that, according to the Quran, the Prophet was also sent down to purify man, to teach them their destiny and wisdom. The process of purification according to Latif consists in asserting our moral independence by denouncing all that is calculated to keep us away from that Straight Path which takes us to our goal.

This peasant girl in the palace of the king finds herself surrounded by all kinds of temptations. Here was a prince at her feet who was prepared to offer everything that his kingly authority could summon if only she was prepared to surrender her person to him. But she, who felt that she belonged to another, and had therefore no right to surrender her person to this king, had to keep her vigil by constantly reminding herself of the place she came from and to which she was destined to go. During the days of her confinement in the Kote of Umar, it became a daily habit with her to go on the roof of the palace and from there to gaze with tear-bedewed eyes in the direction of her hamlet. This meant a great deal of relief to her: it comforted her to believe that one day assuredly she would meet her people.

This duty of constantly reminding oneself of one's destination is prayer. The prayer not only prevents you from trafficking into an immoral and evil course of conduct, but it also strengthens your moral fibre and helps you to attain the higher level of life. It is the same in nature too.

The mother-shell that lies on the breast of the ocean refuses to take even one drop of sea water that lies below it although it be thirsty; instead it looks upwards to heavens and lo! when the rain falls and a drop is caught by her in her womb a pearl is born. The man in the world is thus required to imitate the life of the mother-shell. Living in the world he has yet to be out of it. This thought at another place has been put by Latif in those immoral lines of his:

Monkhe moon pryan budhi widho bar meen
Mathan piya chawan matan pand pusacen.

which translated would run much the way the lines:

Darmyane Qa'ar-e-darya takht bandam kardai
Baz me goee ki daman tar makun hushayar bash.

Latif similarly in his Sur called 'Lilan-Chanesar' has offered to us what may be regarded as his interpretation of human history. This has reference to the tale of a king of Sindh of the thirteenth century, Chanesar by name. He had been married to a girl called Lilan and they lived a happy married life. Chanesar for his part was always prepared to do anything he could in order to keep the queen

happy. In the palace, however, was a courtesan girl, Kunro by name, who anyhow wanted to get at Chancesar and to bring about discord in his married life. Kunro at first openly asked the queen to allow her to spend at least one night with the king but on this being refused, she designed another method of realising her ambition. She had a beautiful and costly necklace with which, in the presence of the queen, she began to play with a childish innocence thereby giving an impression as though what she was playing with was just a toy of ordinary value. The queen asked for the necklace, but Kunro refused to part with it.

Ultimately, as a result of repeated entreaties from the queen, Kunro agreed to part with the necklace provided the queen would allow her as a price for it to spend one night with Chancesar. The queen thought that here was a golden opportunity to get the precious necklace and after all the price she had been asked to pay was not much-only to part company with her husband just for one night. This appeared to her to be not a bad bargain. And so the plot was arranged.

In the bridal chamber on the following night Chancesar discovered not his wife but this girl Kunro and on coming to know that the queen had sold him away for just 'a mess of pottage,' he grew indignant and banished her from the palace. The queen was thus driven out and rendered homeless. She wandered like a beggar maid all the time recalling for herself what a happy state of life she had surrendered for "the touch of a mere necklace"- a thing that did not after all matter much, considering that she could have had several such necklaces for the mere asking. She began to realise that after all it was just for the love of something which had only an apparent value that she had been banished from the palace of her husband.

In this story, Latif breathes transcendental significance. Chancesar symbolises the Heavenly Power from whom all grace and dignity flows and the queen represents the individual who for the mere love of earthly splendour is prepared to reject a heavenly reward. As long as the individual believes in the authority of the Higher Power and is prepared to serve it by exclusively belonging to it, he is immune from all attacks and becomes the recipient not only of God's grace but even the owner of earthly possessions and power. But once he renounces his loyalty to that heavenly power by electing to

choose the mere apparent earthly possessions in preference to doing his duty to God, such is the law that he is forthwith rejected.

He not only forfeits his claims to God's grace but is also denied such earthly authority as he might have wielded. As in the life of the individual so in the life of Nations: the Nations that serve the moral order and are prepared to dedicate themselves for the realisation of the Higher purposes, survive and to them is assigned not only a place of honour in the scheme of things, but they also become wielders of worldly authority.

Such has been for instance, the history of Mussalmans who, as long as they lived only for God and for doing His will, were able, as Carlyle says somewhere, in bare Eighteen Years Time to transform the world "From Granada to Delhi", says he "the world was in flames". They lived for Him and for His glory and they succeeded in establishing God's authority wherever they went.

But then soon the love of earthly possessions began to take possession of their soul and they forsook their God and so-like the queen in the story-they were rejected, with the result that the heights they attained is now a matter of mere historical memory. The Muslims keep on wondering why they have been rejected and they do not seem to appreciate how they have brought themselves to their present state of degradation. I wish I had the time to translate for you some of those soul-stirring verses in Latif's poetry which reflect his views on this problem, but I would be content to conclude this talk of mine with the very thought with which Latif concludes the present Sur.

And the thought is:

Now that the queen has been driven out of her home, has been rejected. What is the way out? How is this queen to regain her original status and get herself admitted in Chanesar's presence? How in other words, is the people or a nation to get back to its position of original power and authority? The answer according to Latif is by returning to God, by doing *Toubah*, by admitting where we have gone wrong, and by continuing praying and imploring for His forgiveness.

Latif always ends on the note of hope. He reiterates the words of the Holy Quran, "Do not despair of the Mercy of God, for God is

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forgiving". We ought not, all the same he warns, feel conceited and indulge in some manner of self-justification and deceive ourselves into believing that the High Power has wronged us. We should, on the other hand, freely acknowledge our having abandoned our loyalty to the Higher Power and repeatedly ask for forgiveness. For in the end let us not forget, God loves Man whom He has created in His own image. And the moment a man strives to return to his Maker earnestly and with due diligence the doors of mercy are always open to him.

That is then Latif's advice to Lilan: the admonition has been cast in a language which has become immortal in Sindhi literature:

That if you do not get near Him by entreating
You must not despair but go on entreating
Do not give up hope, for, God is ever merciful and forgiving.

I wish the Mussalmans heeded this advice and made it a mission of their life to act upon it. If they could live up to it they would provide an example to others. Not by political intrigues or by fraudulent behavior of some tinkers who somehow have managed to go on the top of society, will the cause of Truth be advanced.

It is the humble, the earnest few, through whom God's purpose will come to prevail. Here is, in the poetry of this humble servant of God, a mine of wisdom, a store of inspiration and I venture to suggest to my readers that its continued study will disclose to them those words of wisdom for which there is no parallel any where in human literature.

I would like to close by quoting those lines of Hafiz in order to offer my deepest respect to this poet of my heart:

Saqya sharmandh am zi lutf bey payan-e-tu
Tu mara pur medihe man baz khali me dirham.

The Immortal Beauty of Latif's Sea Poetry

Prof. Muhammad Akram Ansari

"It was no mean or low-born creature which nature chose when she brought man into the mighty assemblage of life and all the order of the universe, and ordained us to be the spectators of the cosmic show and its most eager competitors; for the first she poured into our souls a deathless longing for all that is great and diviner than ourselves." The immortal words of Longinus, the first transcendental critic, uttered about two thousand years ago, remind us of our vital importance in the cosmic scheme, the role we have to play as observers and the keen competition in which we have to participate for dear life, for survival, for advancement. They also reveal to us that the grandeur and nobleness of human soul lies in aspiring after all that is greater and diviner than ourselves. We see, we think, we act, we become: that appears to be the primrose path we have been pursuing to reach a higher end.

The sea appeals to us because it is sublime, because it is vast, because it is limitless, because it is unfathomable, because it is immortal. It also appeals to us on account of its capacity to devour, to hold, to possess and to assimilate. We sometimes feel not only a perfect communion between ourselves and the sea but also an absolute identification. There are waves in the atmosphere in which we breathe, there are waves in the sky we perceive, there are waves in the matter we use. Above all there are waves that rise and fall within us. Is the whole universe not a sea of telepathic communication and interrelationship?

Before we come to our poet let us quote from some of the British sea-lovers. Byron addresses the sea thus:

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests, in all time.
Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale or storm
Icing the pole, or in torrid clime
Bark-heaving, boundless, endless and sublime.
The image of eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made, each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

All the attributes of the sea as a symbol of the Divine Power are brought out with such a vigour that we conceive of it as a Preserver, as a Creator and as a Destroyer, All in One.

Wordsworth in his famous immortality ode emphasizes that it is impossible to forget the sea:

Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland for we be,
Our souls have sight of the immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Only a mystic vision will enable us to conceive how we are brought here by the immortal sea, why we constantly remember the place whence we came hither, how we can, through imagination, travel thither in a moment, why children like to play on the sea-shore and how do we educate ourselves by listening to the mighty waters, rolling evermore.

In a prophetic vision Shelley had a premonition how his life would pass away:

My spirits bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spheroid sky are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar.

This is indeed the way some travel far from the trembling throng of people busy in their mundane activity, never equipped and

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experienced to walk on the path; this is exactly how the earth and the sky make way for the chosen few to move in the clear direction of the Divine Beloved.

An American poet Walt Whitman identifies the Book, his soul's record, with the sailing bark and speaks thus:

Then falter not O book, fulfil your destiny,
You not a reminiscence of the land alone,
You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether,
Purposed I know not wither, yet ever full of faith,
Consort to every ship that sails, sail you!

Little wonder, we, our books, are all sailing like lone barks, cleaving the ether, to an unknowable, unattainable goal, ever full of faith.

II

Samundi is not merely such other poem; it anticipates all such feeling and thought; it rises above all that is commonplace to the level of true sublimity. Latif is the greatest lover of the sea and is in silent sympathy with her moods. His observation is characterized by accuracy and precision. His sketches are alluring and picturesque. His expression is clear, vivid, lucid and incomparable. A keen sense of beauty, whether of landscape, or of rhythmic motion in nature, or of human relationship, lurks throughout the gentle effusion of his delicate spirit.

The subject matter is of universal interest and applicability: it is a common sight of mariners leaving their home and hearth, their wives praying silently for their safe return and waiting patiently and piously till their masters join them temporarily after coming back from their mission of exploring the deep with which they have a spiritual relationship. In which spot of the universe is there no union, separation and reunion? Which soul does not feel the lure of the unknown, infinite, sublime, unattainable? Who does not want to break the worldly bondages so as to assert the most fundamental and prime relationship with the Cosmic Spirit? Shadows deceive: barriers block the vision: earthly beauties betray; so sail on and on to your ever-receding Destiny.

No two souls have walked exactly on the same path and exactly with the same speed. So it is not the act of betrayal if some leave others far behind, however dear the latter be to the former:

پڳهه پاسي ويهه، آيل سامونڊين جي،
تون ويسري وڪ کڻين، هو پوريندا پرڏيهه،
سمند جن ساڙيهه، ڪو نه ويئين تن سين. (1)

"Sit by the side of seafarers; you take negligent steps, they shall sail to a distant land. Why did you not go along with those who have no other homeland but the sea?"

Who is to be blamed if you do not keep pace with the one whom you love?

So the poor woman is left behind to weep and sigh:

سيئي جوين ڏينهن، جڏهن سڄڻ سفر هليا،
روٽان رهن نه سپرين، آيل ڪريان ڪيئن،
مون کي چاڙهي ڇڏين، ويو وڻجارو اوهرِي. (2)

"Same were the days of my prime youth, when my love prepared to sail away. My tears do not stop them. What shall I do? Soon after kindling a flame and setting me on fire, they are thinking of sailing away."

Fear, that they have gone for good, agitates the innocent mind of the poor girl:

ويا اوهرِي او، مون کي ڇڏي ماڳهين
جڳن جا جڳ ٿيا، تڏان نه موٽيو ڪو
گوندن ماريندو، اوچاري وٺن جو. (3)

"They sailed away, forsaking me for ever at this place. Ages have passed, no one returned from that place. The sad thought of complete isolation will destroy the helpless damsel."

What is that land of no return which has brought untold misery to millions of guiltless girls? Is inner suffering the law of life? Why have relations with those who bring nothing but suffering? Note what the poet says:

اوڙاهه ويا نه وريا، آڏانهن ماري ويڻ
ڪري سامونڊي سين، جسي جار پرائيو. (4)

"They went to the Deep; they never returned; I am killed by the ill-treatment. My relationship with the sailors brought affliction to

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my soul."

In spite of the unity of them, there is a vast variety of thought and feeling which few poets can grasp and which is a clear evidence of the range of our poet. Sometimes the woman blames the trade the sailor has learnt:

ڳريو جهليو رو، مٽي مهري هٿڙا
(5) ڪو سودو سندو، جو تون ڏوليا سڪيو.

"Seizing the rope she cries; her hands are on the prow, she says, 'cursed be the trade that you learnt, my dear!'"

Sometimes she compares her heart with the boat:

هينئڙو ٻيڙي، جان، ڌڻڙ پئي ڏينهن ٿيا
(6) پڇيو تان نه پريان، ڪرلا هو ٿي ڪڏهن.

"My Heart, like a boat, suffered long from rough seas; my love never came to enquire about my wellbeing."

Sometimes she thinks fondly how she would speak out her heart when her love comes to her :

جيڪر اچي هاڻ ته ڪريان روح رچنديون
(7) آيل، ڏولئي ساڻ، هوند ڳر لڳي ڳالهيون ڪريان.

"If now he comes I would embrace him and speak heart to heart with him".

Sometimes she thinks of arguing with him:

آيل، ڏولئي ساڻ، اچي ته جهيڙيان
(8) "لاڻي ڏينهن گهڻا، مون سڀن کي ٿورڙا"

"If only he comes, I shall argue with him. I shall say, 'Many days you have spent abroad; to your beloved you have allotted but few'".

Sometimes she tells her mother:

ڏوليو ويڙو ڏور، تي ٿي سيءُ گذاريان
(9) مادر مون نه چور، نا ته پتر پوندي پرينءَ ري.

"My love went away to distant lands. I live here in cold isolation. O mother! do not taunt me, otherwise I will break through my

confinement, mad after my love"

Sometimes she advises the self thus:

وانء وحي وائٺ، هينٺڙا ماڳ پرينء جو
چميو چر چائٺ، هوء جا سندي سڄڻين. (10)

"Go and explore, my heart, the high plane where your love resides. Kiss again and again the threshold of your love's elevated mansion".

All this is after all the inner yearning of a soul who feels as if it has been cut off from all that is noble and sublime; it is an inner suffering and repentance, it is a longing and an aspiration; it is a struggle whose goal is union, as indicated below:

چمڪيون چوڌار، ڏچيون ڌاڙيچن جون
ماء سامونڊي آڻيا، سهسين ڪري سينگار،
انهين جي پچار، ڪالهنڪر ڪانگ ڪري. (11)

"The banners of seafarers sparkled all-round. Mother! They have come with hundredfold decorations. The crow has been giving the good news of their arrival since yesterday."

or

هي سڄڻ سيئي، جي مون ڪوڏ نهاري
ايندمر جان پيهي، ته سڀ لاهندمر ڏکڙا. (12)

"This is the self-same love for whom I was looking forward with hope, pride and joy. As soon as they enter my house, all my sorrows will disappear."

III

Every-where Latif's poetry stimulates us to struggle against inertia. It is our moral duty to make an effort to reach our goal in spite of meagre resources. Peace cannot be obtained in this world. By sitting silent we equate ourselves with dead matter. It is the inner impulse and sincerity which enable you to move on and on towards your cherished goal:

پران مان پچان، بندر مون ڏور ٿيا
نه مون هڙ نه هنج ڪين، جو آئون چئي چڙهان

ايهين ڪڇ پاتڻي، جنهن ڀر ڀرين مڙان
(13) ڪارون ٿي ڪريان، توڊر اُڀي ناکڻا.

"Let me move ; I may reach; the shore is far, far away, I have nothing of the material resources, no worldly influence to recommend me. O ferryman! I entreat you, pray take me in your boat to my love. O Captain! I stand upright before you; I do my best to prove myself worthy. Sail me away from this sinful world to the side of my love."

The seeker should always be conscious of his inner drawbacks and deficiencies. How can one move towards a better life, a better society, a better world if one believes that no perfection exists outside one's self. The best course is to look within and find out why one has been isolated:

مون اڀي تڙوٽ، ڀرين ڀڳهه چوڙيا
(14) ڪا منهن ڀر گهٽ، نات سڄڻ سڃاڻا گهڻو.

"I stand by the sea sighing in wilderness; my love sailed away. Surely there must have been some defect in me, otherwise my love is kind enough not to have left me behind".

Even if they have left you, pray for their safe return and do not lose hope:

مون اڀي تڙوٽ، ڀرين ڀڳهه چوڙيا
هو الله هارا اهريا، آڏو دمدم دعا ڪندياس
(15) آه نه لاهيندياس، موتي ايندا مون گهرين.

"I stand near the sea, they sailed away. Depending on Lord's mercy they departed. I will pray for them every moment. I will never cease to sigh for them. I will never cease to entertain hope that they would return and live with me."

The reason for their leaving is that they aspire after higher things; mere trash will not keep them home; surface has no attraction for them; home, wife and children are only a trail for them:

ڪاري ڪيڙائون، مٽي مٽي موتيا
سودو ڪن نه سون جو، وڏا وهائو
موتي جي مهران، تن جا طاماعو

(16) سامونڊي سائو، لنڪا لويي آيا.

"The explorers of the salt-water, now returned to the sweet-water. They are not content with the trading of gold; they aspire after the pearls of the deep sea. The brave sailors came back after enriching their minds with the picturesque beauties of Lanka (Ceylon)."

What a peep into the mind of a woman do the following lines give us?

جي تون وڻجارو ڪانڌ، ته مون هڏ نه لائون لڏيون
(17) پرڏيهه مٽي سانگ، اٿئي پهر جنهن ڪيو

"O love! if you are a trader-husband, I feel I never did join in permanent union with you. All the twentyfour hours your mind is bent upon embarking the sea and sailing away to distant lands."

No use weeping and crying; no use cunning and craft; no use hypocrisy and snobbery; no use appeals and entreaties; they shall sail away quietly. Note the beauty lurking in the following lines:

ڏٺي ڏياري، سامونڊي سڙه سنيهايا
وڃهيو ورنجهه ڪي، روئي وڻجاري
(18) ماريندءِ ماري، پره سور پرين جا.

"Devali approached, the seafarers trimmed their sails. The tradesman's wife curled round the oar and sighed. O poor lady! the painful separation will kill you early."

Again:

تي ڏياري ڏيٺ، ڏولبو هلڻ جي ڪري
موڪيو پنهنجي مڪري، چيني چيني چڱي ريت
روٽان رهن نه سپرين، جانڪين جهليا بيت
(19) مون سين ڪري ميٺ، سڄڻ هليا

"Devali approached. My love is making preparations for a sea-voyage. He oils his skiff and examines it whether it is sea-worthy. I stagger, trying to hold fast my love's waist, I cry, but they do not stay. After a sweet rendezvous, they sailed quietly away".

So she advises all of us:

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متان وهو ويسريون، رڙهو تي رسو
ووه هيءُ جو وه منهنجي ڇنڊڙي.
مندائتي مينهن جيئن ويرو تار وسو
(20) ووه هيءُ جو وه منهنجي ڇنڊڙي

"Mind! do not sit in utter forgetfulness, neglecting your duty towards your love; move, so that you may reach. See the flow that love has given to my existence. Like seasonal rain let tears of kind love fall heavily upon the universe. Let your soul's showers make the earth prosperous once again. See the stimulation that my love has given to my life."

The mission of your life is to transform the stiff stone into tender tears under the melting influence of love. Melt and start flowing! Melt and penetrate the subtlest pores of matter. Melt and identify your existence with the toiling and suffering millions. Melt and embrace every vibrating beauty of the universe. Melt and inter-relate your existence with every pulsating, scintillating fabric of the stellar cosmos.

IV

Constant remembrance, constant vigilance, patient waiting, sincere prayers, silent sacrifices, modesty and gracefulness: These are the virtues which will bring back the lost love.

جر ٿر ڏيا ڏي، وڻ ٿڻ ٻڌي وانئڻيون،
(21) "الا ڪانڌ اچي، آسائتي آهيان."

"Over sea and land she kindles a lamp. On every branch she fastens a flag. Silently she sighs: 'May the lord arrive! I long for him, I long for him'."

Observation of certain ceremonies and rituals near the sea constantly reminds her of her relationship with the vastness of the physical universe and assures her that her dear husband will ultimately return:

اُڀيون ترڙجين، وهون وڻجارن جيون،
(22) اُٿيوا ڪا ڏين، ڪٿوري سمونڊ ڪي.

"Standing, the wives of the traders worship and show their allegiance. They offer fragrant rice and coconut to the sea."

The poet warns:

جا جرجائون نه ڏيئي، ڏيانه موهي
(23) سڌون ڪوه ڪري، سا پنهنجي ڪانڌ جون

"The woman who does not keep vigils, who does not trim the earthen lamps near the sea, how can she expect the home-coming of her lord?"

Note the inner significance of the following lines:

بندر ديسان ديس، مل نه ملي وارين
(24) فقيرائي ويس، امل ڏرين اتوريا.

"There are ports in every country. There are trading centres everywhere in this wide world. There are centres of wisdom allround the world. But you can't get according to your outward, external merit. Wealth cannot purchase for you spiritual peace and happiness. Only when you appear as a penniless beggar, only when you renounce your greed for wordly goods, do they give away valueless pearls without measure."

Spiritualism is no supersitition, it is no reactionary force for keeping the workers backward; it is no opium. On the other hand it consists in controlling human passions so that material prosperity would be shared by all. You can unite with the Lord and enjoy eternal bliss only through control of desire, only through sacrifice.

Finally you recognize the divine symbols and see your Lord through them. The last chorus is a piece of unique beauty and simplicity:

تڙ نهاريان تي، منهنجا بندر وٽڙا جي
مان سڙه سڃاڻان سپرين
اُپي اوسه پائيان، ڪارڻ وٽجاري
مان سڙه سڃاڻان سپرين
گهڻو اڪنڊي آهيان، پرين پنهنجي ڪي
مان سڙه سڃاڻان سڄڻين
اسائتي آهيان، الا ڪانڌ اچي
(25) مان سڙه سڃاڻان سپرين

"Alone, on the shore I look and seek my love,

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I recognize my love by the sails.
I look forward and see a good omen
Which will bring my love near to me,
I can recognize the sails of my love.
How fondly do I look for my love!
The sails indicate my love's approach
I am hopeful. I wish my love may come,
By the sails I do recognize my love."

The reader may, if he so desire, draw out purely secular, sensual and materialistic interpretation. After all, only little minds distinguish between matter and mind, nature and God, secular and spiritual. In actual life, in the living universe, the one is so deeply interspersed, interfused with the other that it is a heresy to discriminate. There is no duality but unity in the space-time continuum. Only you should see the infra-red and the ultra-violet beyond the visible spectrum. Acquire a whole vision. See your love.

V

Don't you see the signs spread everywhere in nature? There is an old Book with us which has kept up its freshness because it contains a universal message for all of us. It is the fountain of all the beauty, light and wisdom which only a few rich souls can comprehend. In the third section of the thirty sixth chapter named "Ya-Sin" some of the signs are indicated on whose understanding depends our life and death as individuals and as nations. Recognize the signs and you live; ignore the signs and you are wiped out.

See the earth that is dead during winter. Who quickens it to life and produces grain? Who produces orchards with a variety of fruit which we eat? Who causes springs to gush forth from the rocks? Can you make any such fruit with your own hands? Is this not a sufficient reason to be grateful to the mighty Power who produces it for your sustenance? Is it also not your duty to help the earth's fertility as soon as the first sign of spring appears? "When winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Glory to the Power who created in pairs all things that the earth produces! They may be plants, they may be animals, they may be human beings, they may be things you know not: they are all in pairs. See the system of checks and balances nature has provided. Nay, even within your body and soul are kept pairs, delicate balances. Don't you see why wife loves the husband and husband loves the wife? Don't you see why the tradesman returns to his home and

hearth after all the wandering?

Another sign is that this very earth is plunged in darkness during night. Who strips it of its light? When the light is removed from our soul what remains behind? When a body is deprived of its life, what remains behind? When a nation is deprived of its moral wisdom, vision and imagination, nothing is left behind but a horrifying picture of decomposing, stinking corpses.

Move on and see other signs. The sun runs his course for a period determined; he also seeks his ultimate rest. The moon has also his phases or stages till he turns like an old dry branch of a palm-tree. It is not permitted to the sun to catch up with the moon nor can the Night outstrip the Day.

And then the magnificent truth:

Each swims in its own Orbit. Do individual souls not swim in their own orbits despite their obedience to the Universal Law. Do we not enjoy sufficient freedom to follow our own aptitude within the universal framework? When nature gives free-will even to an electron to move in its orbit and sometimes to jump from an inner orbit to an outer orbit, why un-necessary interference in human freedom? Can't we learn a lesson from nature? How can a sailor's wife stop her husband from sailing away?

Let us not stop with the natural phenomena; let us also think of human race and human destiny. In the following verses the Quran conceives of the whole human destiny, of the whole human race as sailing in an ark, living precariously for a determined period depending on the mercy of the Lord:

و آیت لهم انا حملنا ذريتهم في الفلك المشحون.

و خلقنا لهم من مثله ما يركبون.

و ان نشاء نغرقهم فلا صريخ لهم ولا هم ينقذون.

الا رحمت منا و متاعا الي حين.

"And a sign for them is that we bore their race in the loaded Ark; and we have created for them similar vessels on which they ride. If it were our will we could drown them; then would there be no helper, nor could they be delivered, except by way of mercy from Us and by way of convenience for a time."

Yes, we are riding on this earth too, swimming through a sea of ether, dangerously, precariously, for an appointed time, to an unknown destiny. We have to learn a lesson from what has passed on

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before us and to fear the coming events. But foolishly we think that the piece of land we have occupied with the ephemeral structure we have raised on it and the worldly goods we have accumulated, are our permanent possessions. When called upon to spend out of what God has provided us to relieve human suffering, we foolishly argue: "Shall we then feed those, whom, if God had so willed, He would have fed Himself," forgetting that this world is a test for all those who have and those who have not, and that we are in clear error. Further we challenge the Inevitable event to come to pass, arrogantly believing that we are the masters of the situation. We are waiting for nothing but a Single Blast while we are disputing matters among ourselves. Surely we shall have no chance to make a will to dispose of our affairs, or to return to our people or families. What, then, will happen to our accumulated goods we so voraciously have acquired and preserved for ourselves and for our offspring?

And so the folly of all follies to which human beings are exposed is that "Not a Sign comes to them from among the signs of their Lord, but they turn away therefrom."

Blessed be the soul who said:

تر نهاريان تي، منهنجا بندر وٽرا جي
مان سڙهه سڃاڻان سپرين

"Standing on banks of time, I look forward to my beloved who has sailed away to a distant port. I know the sails, the signs, the signals, the symbols of my Lord."

Such a soul alone may save us by helping us See the Signs.

Translations:

1

Beside the sailors hawsers take your seat,
O' mother! you take negligent step,
Their oars shall the foreign water beat,
They make the sea their home, you only gape.

2

Same are the days of my virulent youth,
When my love prepares to sail away,
Unchecked by my tears, showing no ruth,
Kindling a flame, he goes, ah wellaway!

3

Forsaking me they sailed to unknown destiny,
Ages passed, none returned to the dismal land,
I shall be killed with grief, woe to me!
Who live in sorrow on the lonely sand.

4

To the mysterious deep they sailed,
Bringing misery untold to my poor soul,
Contact with the sailors have I often wailed,
Love, on my being, hath ta'en a heavy toll.

5

Now seizing the rope she cries,
Now with her hands on the prow,
The vast expanse she pries,
Now she moans, while she wipes her brow,
"Cursed be the trades you learnt my dear!
That tore you away from my sphere."

6

Like a boat, for many a night,
My heart in waters rough did ache,
My love never came to know my plight,
No relief he gave for dear love's sake.

7

If once he comes from his sea-voyage,
I'll bury myself in his loving arms
And talk heart to heart of his pledge
Never to leave me for all sea-charms.

8

If once he comes, I'll argue with him:
"Many a day far away did you spend,
In distant lands forlorn, dark and dim,
Never home, you thought, your ways to wend."

9

My love is gone to a distant land,
I live here in solitary cold,
Tease me not, O mother! with a fiery brand,
Or I'll break loose, brave and bold.

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10

Go and explore, my afflicted heart!
Thine love's stately, high mansion,
Kiss again and again his elevated mart,
Where he trades in his high fashion.

11

All round the seafarer's flags do shine,
They come with all the glamour and glow,
On my sky I see a silver line,
To my soul the news did gently flow.

12

O this is the self-same love,
For whom I looked with pride and joy,
I thank the heavens above,
Now my sorrows are but a toy.

13

Let me move, I may reach the glamorous port,
Penniless am I, who'll bring me there?
I pray, O captain, lift me to my love's fort,
Save my life from cankerous care.

14

Not unkind, not ruthless, was my love,
Who kept me waiting on the shore,
On my faulty ways do I often rove,
On my defects do I dwell, more and more.

15

On the hoary sea did they embark,
I pray for them, I pray for them,
May the Merciful Lord bless their ark,
I hope they shall the wild waves tame.

16

He who ploughed the sea, now unfurls,
To waters sweet, the trader great,
Cares not for gold, he deals in pearls,
Exploring Lanka he brings his freight.

17

O love! If you are a sailor-husband,
I never truly did in marriage join,
You never set your foot on solid land,
For sea-life alone you gird your loin.

18

Devali passed, they trimmed their sail,
Curling round the mast she sighed,
Sad separation shall waste her body frail,
Constant care shall, by her side, abide.

19

Devali over, now he thinks of sailing away,
He oils his skiff, he makes it sea-worthy,
However hard I try, He doth not stay,
Meeting and parting, is my sad destiny.

20

Stay not forgetful, move that you may reach,
See how love hath thawed my life,
Like seasonal shower, pour heavily on the beach,
See how love hath made me ripe and rife.

21

Over land, over sea, she kindles a lamp,
To every branch she fastens a flag,
Her eyes tearful, bedewed and damp,
"May he come! my hopes do not wag."

22

Upright, the wives to the sea their obeisance pay,
Rice and coconut sweet do they offer,
For their dear ones safety do they prayers say,
Thus they do the fragrant gifts proffer.

23

She who doth not steadfast vigils keep
Nor doth the earthen lamps keep in form,
How can she expect her lord's return from Deep,
And ward off evils of the ferocious storm?

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24

Every realm has ports where you may buy,
But values you may not with money get,
Never play the role of a clever guy,
In beggars garb do they the pearls set.

25

On the shoals of time I stand and look
For my love who to the distant harbour took;
I look forward and seek a good omen,
That'll bring him from a far-off domain;
How fondly, do I look for him, hope for him,
Who sailed beyond the earthly rim;
From the Great Beyond he flashes his signs,
I love his symbols, I read the lines.
I recognize the sails, I recognize the sails,
The glamorous bark from where he hails.

Images In The Poetry of Shah Latif

Tanveer Abbasi

All the fine arts are related to one another because all of them convey the sentiments and feelings of human beings. In poetry, words play the part of colours and tunes. In painting colours, and in music tunes are used as a medium, but in poetry, images are created by words.

We gain knowledge of external world through our sense-organs. Sense organs are means of communication between our inner self and external world. Walleck and Warren write: "Imagery is a topic which belongs both to psychology and to literary study. In psychology, the word image means a mental reproduction- a memory of a post sensational or perceptual experience, not necessarily visual."¹

I.A. Richards says that "for every possible kind of sensation there is corresponding possible image."² So, we can have visual image, auditory image, olfactory image, tactile image, thermal image, and taste image etc. Remy D. Gourmont writes that "a poet can record in two ways through rhythm or through imagery."³ Julius Supervile writes, "Image is a magic lantern which lights the poets in their darkness."⁴ J. Issac writes, "Poets recognised images and their function long before critics analysed them".⁵

In the West, an Imagist movement was started in the early years of this century, and the leaders of the movements were Ezra Pound, Richard Arligton, Hilda Dolittle, F.S.Flint and others.

The poetry of Shah Latif has risen more from nature than books. He was a very keen observer. Nearly every landscape of Sindh is present in his poetry. May it be desert, forest, sea, river, boats

and ships, caravans, flocks of cranes, full moon nights, dawn, rain-fall and many others. Images of Shah Latif are so vivid that they bring to mind Ezra Pounds's lines "the images would start to speak."⁶

رات سہائي پون سنئين پٽين وڌو پنڌ
هلندي جيبين ڏي ڪرھا موڙ نه ڪنڌ

Full moon night-Vast and straight land all around, and a camel rider-The fore-ground in this image is equally vivid as the back-ground.

Here is a fresh image-as if it has been drawn just now.

پورئين پاند تمن ۽ جهڳر جهاڳي آئيون
ڪاچو مينهڙين، مندائتوئي ماڻهو

Water is trickling from bodies of white buffaloes-They have just now come out of water.

In contrast to this image, there is one which conveys the feeling of the passage of time-a sense of past.

روئان ٿي راتا، هنڌ نهاري حجرا
پيئي ڪه ڪئن تي، ٿيا پلنگ پراڻا
جايون گل جبات، وڌ توڙي ڪوماڻا

I weep while looking at the beds-the cots have been studded with dust and beds are wornout-The pillows have been dirty, and flowers over the bed have dried up.

This is a picture of a bed room, which has not been used for a long time- with the passage of time, drying of flowers, and appearance of dust over bed has occurred.

Archibald MacLeish writes "poems are not meant to be beautiful-they are meant to be poems-Images in poems are not meant to be beautiful-they are meant to be images in poems."⁷

This image is not beautiful, but a real image.

ڪاريون ڪوجهيون ڪوڙيون مور نه موچاريون
وئي وينيون واٽ تي ڪڪي، جون ڪاريون

The fisherwomen-dark complexioned, ugly featured, and dirty,

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sit by the path with foul smelling baskets full of fish.

Shah Latif creates images, but in some of his poems, features of persons are the only image. They are like portrait photographs, in which whole stress lies over the person, and the background is ignored.

سنهي لڪ نڪ سنئين ڪجل پنل نيڻ

Narrow waist, long nose, and eyes stained with *kajal*.

وارو ور وٺي ويا، ڏاڙهي پنيڻا ڏير.

Persons with long blonde beards.

Shah Latif, not only draws word pictures, but he draws them with all their colours. Many of his images are colour images.

ڪال گديوسين ڪاپڙي، بابوبان بري

سائي شال ڪلهن تي، سامي سون سري

Yesterday I met a *yogi* with the colour of earth, having a green *shawl* over his shoulders and golden *malha* (necklace).

جهڙا پانن پن، تهڙيون شالون مٿن سائون

They have *shawls*, as green as betel leaves over them.

ڏاڙهي رت رتياس، ڏند ته ڏاڙهونءِ گل جئن

جوڏهينءِ ماه چنڊ جي، پڙ ۾ پاڳڙياس

This is a picture of injured Imam Hussain in the battle of Karbala. His beard is stained with blood, his bleeding teeth look like promegranate flowers (انار ڪلي) and his turban shines like the full moon in the battle field.

These images are still, but some images contain a sense of movement-they are moving images. They are just like movie films. They convey a feeling of something happening. I.A.Richards has also spoken about moving images. Let us have a look over such images in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif:

هيٺ جر مٽي ميجر پاسي ۾ وٺراه

اچي وڃي وڃ ۾ تماچيءِ جي ساء

لڳي اتر واءِ ڪينجهر هندورو ٿئي.

This is a landscape showing the water of Kinjhar lake below,

and green grass above, with trees nearby, and the boat of king Jam Tamachi sailing about. The north winds blow and the boat starts rocking like a cradle. This blowing of the north wind and rocking of the boat gives the sense of movement to the image.

Tactile and thermal sense organs are also important. We can have tactile and thermal images corresponding to them. Here are some thermal images:-

سہ سيارو پاڻي پارو جهڙ جهڪ ۽ جھول

The peak of winter is there, the water of the river is ice cold, there are dust storms and clouds.

اترڏني اوت، نه مون سوڙ نه گبرو،

چارئي چني پوت مون ريت هيندي رات گئي.

Cold north winds are pouring in, and I do not have any rug or blanket -I pass whole night in pulling corners of under- sized bed sheet over me. This image is not only a thermal image but the effect of cold over the poor lady is also clear.

Now just the opposite-sense of heat:

وڏا وڻ وڻڪار جا، جت جائو جمر جر

کوسا تپن ڪڪرا، پيو دمدمر تپي ڌر.

Big trees and wild animals- the sand has been heated up, and gravel path is also hot.

Now we come to the sense of smell, which gives rise to olfactory images.

Shah Latif has the art of creating magic of sweet smell.

آئي اترواء، موڪي مت اڀتئا

متارا تهه ساء، اچن سرسبهاهيون.

مونڪي، مت اڀتئا، سويرا صبح

اچي جي عبداللطيف چئي، پاس نه پهتئ هو،

ڪڙو جي ڪڪوه، ته به وڻ سرگهرن وٺيون.

Mokhi (The bartender girl) opens the lids of earthen-ware pots full of wine early in the morning. The smell of rich mature wine spreads in the atmosphere, and the drunkards reach the tavern by fol-

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lowing the smell. Though the wine is bitter even then they ask for cups filled upto the brim.

This was the fragrance of wine, but the human body, especially that of the beloved has a peculiar smell.

سُرهِي منجهان ساٿ، آٿي بوءِ پنيور ڪي
بيٺا بزارن ۾، ٺاهي جت جيات.

The fragrance of bodies of Punhoo and his companions spreads in the whole town of Bhambhore, only when they remove their coats:-

These two olfactory images are very interesting.

لهر مڙيوئي لال، وهڻ ڪٿوريان وترو
اوپارا عنبير جا، جرمان اچن جال

This image describes the blood stained waves of the Indus, after Suhni has been drowned, and her Body torn up by crocodiles. But the flow of water carries the sweet smell of the body of Suhni, which is richer than *Kastoori*, and the fragrance of *Amber* is felt in the atmosphere when the wind blows.

The Second image is as under:

جنهن تڙ ڏوڙيون ڏون، چوٽا چندن چڪ ڪيو
اچن پونئر پنيوليا پاڻيءَ تهن پُون.

Beautiful women, who have applied sandal-wood scent to their hair are bathing -when they wash their hair in water the sweet smell of sandal wood gets mixed with the water, and the large black bees (پنور) get confused and fall in the scented water, mistaking it for flowers.

As already quoted, images are not meant to be beautiful, but they are merely images. The art of poetry is to describe each and every type of scene correctly and vividly. Shah Latif has created many images which convey the picture exactly and vividly, may it be beautiful or ugly.

ڪڪي، هائيون ڪاريون چچي، هائا چچ
پاند جنين جي پاند سا، لڳو ٿئي لڄ

(They have) Baskets with fishy smell, and dirty cloths-so dirty

that one would feel ashamed even if his cloth touches theirs.

This is a complete picture of ugliness, and fishy smell.

Auditory images create certain sounds from memories. Shah Latif has plenty of them.

چوڌاري چڙا ٻرن پيلائين جا
وهڻ مون نه وڙاءُ سڻي جهانءِ جهجي هينئون.

While sleeping, some sounds stuck to my ears-and they were the bells in the necks of Mehar's buffaloes. I hear them all around. I can not wait.

The sounds of bells come from all the directions, and they surround the person.

In this line there is another type of sound.

منڌيون مٽ گڙن، جهوڪ به سونهن پهڙا

This sound is that of the churning of milk.

These images were related to only one sense organ, but Shah Latif has created many images which are related to more than one sense organ. He is the poet of finer feelings, and he is the poet of all the five senses. Some of his poems have images which are simultaneously visual, olfactory as well as auditory.

اُپر چنڊ پَس پرين، تو اوڏا، مون ڏور،
ساڄن ستا ولهه ڀر، چوٽا پري ڪپور.

Oh moon, arise and behold my beloved, sleeping on the terrace in the chilled atmosphere, with her hair filled with scent of *camphor*.

This image is visual, describing the scene of a sleeping beauty. Tactile, while expressing chill in the atmosphere, and olfactory, containing the smell of *camphor*, such images can be called compound images. To quote one more:

وڻن وينا کانگ، وڃين ٿي ويلا ڪري
گهڙي گهڙي هٿ ڪري، سڻي سانجهي ٻانگ

"Crows are returning to the trees, and *moazzin* is calling for evening prayers-she is entering the river with a pitcher."

This image is visual, but the evening call for prayers by the *moazzin* conveys auditory factor also.

Images are not the end of the art of poetry- they are only a

means towards achieving a greater end- and that is to convey an experience to the reader. Burgson says that many different images taken from different places focus the mind on one single thing.⁸ The experience of reality is the sole purpose of poetry, for which a poet uses image as a means.

Archibald MacLeish writes, "one image is established by words which make it sensors and vivid to the eyes or ears or touch to any of the senses. Another image is put beside it. And a meaning appears which is neither the meaning of the images nor the meaning of the other, nor even the sum of both, but a consequence of both."⁹ He further writes ' "They (images) are not even coupled merely to seize on the moments of experience made palpable to emotions to comprehend an instant of Analogies Universelle.

Let us find such coupled images in the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif.

آء نه گءي ٲرينء كي، تون ٲو لهين سچ

There are two different images-setting sun, and a woman. The woman, who has not yet been able to meet her beloved cries- "sun you are setting, and I have not yet reached my beloved." The objects are different but their juxtaposition creates a gloomy, pessimistic atmosphere.

اڱن تازي، ٲهر ڪنڊيون، ٲڪا ٲٽ سونهن
سُرهي سچ ٲاسي ٲرين، مر ٲيا مينهن وسن

Horses of good breed (*Tazi*) are present in the courtyard. Beloved is lying on the same scented bed as her. Let it rain. In these lines, horses in the courtyard, and the beloved on a fragrant bed are two different images, but they have some unity. They point towards a prosperous and carefree life.

نه سي وٽن وٽن ٲر، نه سي ڪاتاريون
ٲسٽو بازاريون، هينٽرو مون لوڻ ٿيو

This is a rare type of coupled image. There are no cotton plants, the fields are barren, and spinning girls are also not there. When one looks to the bazars, one gets depressed.

Two different images-barren fields, and gloomy vacant bazars-but both of them point towards economic crisis which attacks Sindh when cotton crops are destroyed.

Here is another interesting coupled image.

اسان اڌارا آئي آونگ چاڙهيا
مه ڏي مون آيا سامهون سبارا
اڀرن سڪار پئو ورهين جا.

The woman has borrowed money to cook her food, She is apprehensive of the coming winter season. She sighs when she comes across the husbands of her friends.

Borrowing money, cold nights of the winter season, all alone in bed and sighing over the sights of others' husbands-all the three images are different, but all of them point to one reality-loneliness. A wife without a husband has to borrow, sleep alone in cold winter nights, and sigh at the sight of other womens' husbands.

These were some of the many images created by Shah Abdul Latif. He is very sensitive and has used an exact language to describe them. His images are more vivid, real and fresh than many imagist poets. He has the art of recreating any experience, beautiful or ugly, fragrant or foul smelling, of prosperity or poverty, pain or pleasure.

He has created visual images, which are moving and coloured. There is a variety of thermal, tactile, olfactory, auditory, compound and coupled images.

Ezra Pound writes "It is better to present one image in a life time than to produce voluminous works of art."¹⁰

Shah Latif has presented so many images.

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- (7) Poetry and Experience Middlesex 1965, p. 58.
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Shah Latif's Conception of Tauhid

Ziauddin S. Bulbul

Tauhid (Unity of God) and Risalat (Prophethood of Muhammad, may the peace of God be upon him) are the main articles of faith in Islam which create the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. The doctrine of *Tauhid* is fundamental to Islam as well as to all other world religions. The philosophers, the sufis, the theologians of Islam were all preoccupied with this problem. In old philosophical Hinduism, we have the belief of Brahma-cum-Atma with the background of Maya (mysterious Nothingness). Magians and Zoroastrians had the eternally fighting forces of Light and Darkness. Christianity combined with ancient Greek philosophy took the Trinity, with God, Father and Holy Ghost, as a cardinal article of faith. The Jains had Naturism. In Buddhism we have the illusory notion of substance and soul and the doctrine of Nirvana and man becoming a Buddha with striving.

After Hallaj (244-298 A.H.) this doctrine of *Tauhid* became so intricate that a ceaseless wrangle ensued between the school of thought perfected by Ibn al-Arabi, the school of thought headed by Farabi and Ibn Sina, and the one founded by Ghazzali (d.505 A.H) and his successor Abdul Qadir Jilani (471 - 561 A.H). The main aspects of the problem were, whether the creation was identical with the Creator, or whether it was united with Him or whether it was at all existent or non-existent. Later on, the controversy was crystallised into two schools, namely the *Wahdat Waujoodi* and the *Wahdat Shuhoodi* (propounded by Mujaddid Alif Sani). Shah Waliullah sought to reconcile both. But the matter has not rested there. The in-

terpretation still goes on, hotly continuing to this day, and is likely to go on even hereafter with unabated heat and passion.

In Western thought we have the same problem ranging from Bishop Berkeley's 'every thing is in the mind of God' to pure and simple materialism which denies the existence of soul or at best concedes it as merely an extension of the body. In Kant we have the sharp distinction between the things as they appear (knowable or Phenomena) and things as they are (unknowable or Noumenon). Then we have Parallelism of mind and matter or monadism or Holistic Hylozoism (of Haeckel and Paulsen). Then there is agnosticism which avers that we are not destined to know any thing.

Henry Bergson in his theory of *Elan Vital* held that there is Intelligence and there is matter but both are allied so much so that intellectuality and materiality become identical. This was anticipated by Ibn Rushd who had first propounded Monopsychismus, that is to say, the doctrine that eternity and unity of intellect on identity of God with the Universal Spirit is one and same thing. Ghazzali held on to creationism, thus saving the actuality of the universe: and yet he appeared to agree with the pantheistic Sufis in believing that every thing other than Allah was non-existent. He thus steered clear of Universalism and through going Pantheism. According to him the common crowd's interpretation of *Tauhid*, the mere declaration of oneness of Allah is an inadequate bare truism. Likewise the pantheistic interrelation of the world as an absolute denial of the actuality of things or an assertion that things are 'Allah' (identical with Him) is *Shirk* that is to say, the greatest sin of confusing God with the creation. In his *Mishkat al-Anwar*, translated in English with an introduction by W.H.T. Gardner (1952), he has elaborated his idea in intricate allegory of a niche and a light and a light of the light etc. In short, he can be summed up to say that things are united with God but are not identical with God, and that God alone knows best.

In the *Metaphysics of Rumi*, Dr. Khalifa Abdul Hakim (1959), has elaborately dealt with views of the great Rumi regarding this question. In this essay I have briefly surveyed the question only to serve as a background for understanding how Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit has tackled this problem of problems. In only one short couplet of his he has encompassed the whole discussion given above and surpassed it.

The couplet is this:

عالم "آئون" سان، ڀريو ٿو پير ڪري،
پر نه آهي ڄاڻ، مانڊي مند پڪيڙيو.

"Alam aunoon san, bharyo tho bher karay
Par na ahay jan, Mandi mund pakheriyo."

In these bare two lines he sums up all the philosophy on this point of Hallaj, Ghazali, Ibn al-Arabi, Ibn Rushd, Mujaddid Alif Sani, Leibniz, Paulson and Bergson and yet registers one step in advance of them all. Literally the lines mean as under:

The Universe together with 'I' is full tiding,
I have no knowledge how the Magician has spread charm
abiding.

The word *Alam* is not merely the *World* but also the Universe. It is in this sense that the word *Alam* is used by Shah in this couplet. The word 'I' stands for human ego or *ana*. The word *Bharyo* meaning 'full' is taken from the language used in connection with full flooding of the river, particularly Mehran, which inspired not only Shah of Bhit but also Qalandar Shahbaz of Schwan, both of whom were tempted to add the third element of ebb and tide of Mehran to the two principles of starry sky overhead and the moral law within of Kant for unravelling the mystery of life on earth. The allied word *Bher* also refers to the seasonal revisitation of the flood-water in the usual low-lying places near the river. Thus in this incomparably beautiful metaphor Shah has hinted at the spurts of ecstasy of flashes of consciousness which sometimes make the 'inebriates' to realise union with God and thereafter regaining intelligence repudiate or repent such claims.

It must be noted that Ghazzali, Rumi, and others state this only as a fact but they do not explain how this fact takes place. Shah includes the explanation in the statement of fact. The great Rumi says, "some times I sit on the highest sky and some times I even fail to discern the back of my own foot." But he does not say why or how. Shah indirectly says the same thing but also supplies the explanation by use of a choice metaphor. The metaphor is borrowed from the mother tongue and pertains to the soil. What a triple achievement! By asserting that the Sufis of the Hallaji school attain union with God in moments of ecstasy, the deprecants themselves commit a grave sin by admitting such a power of prowess being in the 'inebriates', as Ghazzali would call them. This is concession to *Ulgahiyat*. But Shah of Bhit avoids this pitfall by denying knowl-

edge of the accomplished fact. He outwardly says I have no knowledge. This refers not only to what has preceded the phrase but also applies to what follows it, namely, the 'universe' together with 'I' is fully tiding, as well as, the Magician's spread of charm. He experiences both the phenomena, but does not claim knowledge of the same. *Ana* has been compared with the snake, that is why God has been called the Magician in this context. This experience afforded to the *ana* of the Sufi, and not achieved, is a charm in the sense of something highly pleasing and ingratiating to keep the 'self' of the Sufi satisfied, as a snake is by the spell of the *Jogi*.

Thus what smacked of, *Uloohiyat* has been turned into *Fazl* (grace or favour). The word 'charm' used here has the other meaning of a spell also. A *Jogi* charms a snake by particular notes of the flute (*murli*) but when the same *Jogi* enthralls the snake or removes the after effects of the snake bite by chanting a *muntar* (a conglomeration of esoteric words supposed to meet the particular situation or overcome a particular evil force or spirits), he is said to be casting a *mund* or a spell in that narrow connotation. Thus this word, *Mund* is in perfect accord and consonance with the snake of 'ana', the graceful God or Magician, the seeming effect of interplay of 'I' and the Universe. Shah has avoided the concept of parallelism and adopted the concept of interplay of Intelligence and matter which Bergson elaborated. He furnishes the most satisfying of all explanations why God pleases the *Sufi* by making him to experience an exhilarating union with the universe and through it with what really is the Absolute and the Unpredictable. Is this not *Shuhoodi Wahdat* in a few words?

In Sindhi language there is also a word *Jadoogar* which means a sorcerer in general but Shah has used the word *Mund* which particularly refers to a snake charmer. He may be or may not be a *Jogi*. A *Jogi* is primarily concerned in catching the snakes but if he also removes the after-effects of snake-bite as well as holds the snake spell-bound, he is called a *Mando*. Employment of the term implies the state of union with universe and God to be like a state after being bitten by a snake (the snake of *Uloohiyat*). Being undogmatic and kind, Shah does not directly condemn such a state. But by an unconscious use of metaphors, he conveys the satire much more effectively and with a tinge of pathos. Thereby he also indirectly extols 'self' in juxtaposition with those sufis who annihilate the self and become so much absorbed in the *Jamal* (Beauty) and *Jalal* (Might) of God that they never hanker after union but yearn only for serving

the creation of God. This is the healthy state as against the afflicted one mentioned in the couplet. He nowhere positively admits that there is a union with God. This is inferred only by necessary implication as it is done in case of sorites where we have to read in between the lines and fill up the gap from imagination.

In the couplet itself, there is only talk of the Universe fully tiding with 'I' through the spell cast by the Magician. But by bringing in the *Mando* this full tiding of the Universe with the 'I' by implication, goes up to cover the union of 'I' with God also, to complete the process. Thus the couplet is not merely a statement such as would stop at parallelism or mind and matter or with the pre-established harmony of monadology or with the intermingling of mind and matter in a march towards creative activity to make a break-through from the resistance of matter.

In all these three philosophical positions there is no third element. But in the couplet of Shah, there is a third element, that of the *Mando*, from whence emerges the sorites. It is only by supplementing the sense with a union of God that the picture of full tiding of the universe with the 'I', becomes clear and meaningful. Then the full tiding of the universe recedes in the back-ground and the *Mando* looms large in the picture. Thus the position of Ghazzali that when the initiate and the adept advance in experience, the *La Ilaha* with plurality of things falls away in entirety leaving the absolute Unity of *Ila Allah*. In the alternative, the magician remains like a wire-puller in the back-ground, leaving the universe to loom large on the horizon as an accomplished fact and on actuality. This hints at the reason and the nature of creation also. Man and universe have been created to be one with each other. This again leaves a distinction between God and the creation. The meaning of the couplet is ever changing like the flow of the mighty Mehran. The couplet inspite of a positive content also contains the sufistic doctrine: 'I have known this that I know nothing'. The positive element in it is that the Magician can be judged only from the charm he has spread.

I have yet to see a more complete philosophical exposition, in such a short, pithy and pregnant statement. I have yet to see a more well-knit and clear-cut couplet of poetry in which each word is irreplaceable and eloquent. The poetic diction, the superb style, the unique thought and the masterly art of metaphor and verse making leave one breathless.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai

Karim Bakhsh Khalid

The renowned Sindhi sufi poet, Shah Abdul Latif, whose mortal remains are enshrined at Bhitshah, a tiny and unattractive village about 30 miles from Hyderabad on the Karachi---Peshawar National Highway, was not an ordinary poet. He was a genius,

'Flowing like a crystal river,
Bright as light, and clear as wind'.

He had that 'all-comprehensive tenderness', and that 'tantalizing intellect', which have made his verses the delight and the solace of the learned as well as of the ignorant, of the Hindu as well as of the Muslim. The great lyricist, Hafiz (d.1390 A.D), has been styled the 'Petrarch of Persia', and Shah Latif has been styled the 'Hafiz of Sindh'. But both Petrarch (d.1374 A.D) and Hafiz fail to give a correct idea of the poetry of their Sindhi counter part. Shah Latif has wedded the beautiful national legends of the country to his immortal verse--- has impregnated these legends with the most valuable transcendental truths--- and has given them a purity of lustre, tenderness and a pathos, rarely equalled and never surpassed.

He not only wrote melodious songs-- but he lived melodious days. His life was so holy and so pure, that Plato would hardly have had the heart to exclude him from that model Republic, which had no place for 'charming and versatile poets'. Abdul Latif was something more than a charming rhymers, he was a poet- in the true sense of the word--a bright poet --a powerful poet and above all a saintly poet.

His Life

There is no satisfactory account of Shah Abdul Latif's life. Nor will there ever be. The facts of his life have been but sparsely recorded. Most of what is known comes from oral tradition.

Shah Abdul Latif belonged to a respectable Sayyid family of Herat who migrated to Sindh during the sixteenth century and enjoyed great respect and eminence. He was born in 1690 and died in 1751 A.D. His life coincided almost exactly with the change from Moghul to Kalhora rule in Sindh. When Aurangzeb died (1707 A.D.), Shah Abdul Latif was a young man of about eighteen years. He was fifty years old when Nadir Shah sacked Delhi (1739 A.D.) and made Sind tributary to Persia. He was fifty-eight when Ahmed Shah Durrani brought off his coup against the dying Delhi empire, founded modern Afghanistan and made Sindh subject to Kabul.

He produced a considerable quantity of verse. But it contains little or no reference to the current political events (See Appendix-I) which he had witnessed. He was interested not in the transient phenomenon of his age but in eternal varieties, which formed a much better subject for immortal verse than the petty wars and intrigues of the Kalhora rulers. Shah Abdul Latif's life was in fact uneventful. He took no active part in the great movements of his time. In this respect, he recalls the instances of Kant and Hegel, who, living in the midst of stirring political events, took no notice of them.

"Some Allusions can, however, be detected in the *Risalo* to certain contemporary or earlier situations as distinct from specific events of the time.

"In *Sur Samundi* ('The Sea Farers') of the *Risalo*, the once flourishing sea trade between Sindh and the coastlines of South-East Asia comes into limelight. Mariners and merchants from Sindh used to take their merchandise all the way to Malaysia, Sumatra and Jawa. This trade was disrupted by the Portuguese intervention about two hundred years before Shah Abdul Latif, and subsequently it continued to be further squeezed by the other European powers, the English who established their first factory in Thatta in 1635 AD. The Sindh trade boats were in a real danger during the days of Shah Abdul Latif; as such he would seem to have alluded to this situation in one of his verses as follows:

"The mu'allims are not (strong) in their former position, while the *Firangis* are frequenting the inside (of the coastlines)

The Message of the Master

Beware Oh Mariner! the thieves have already boarded your boat."

"In 1699, when Shah Abdul Latif was about nine years old, the Scot Captain Alexander Hamilton had seen the cotton industry flourishing in Thatta. The highly organised assemblies of spinners, mostly womenfolk, were the backbone of this industry. *Sur Kapa'iti* ('The Spinner') of the *Risalo* presents a perspective of the assemblies of the womenfolk engaged in the spinning profession. There were bankers (*saraf*) who paid to each spinner for her daily output the amount depending on the weight of the spun yarn as well as its quality. Accountability for the quality is the main strain running through the *Kapa'iti* theme. This would indicate that the cotton industry was still flourishing in Sindh during Shah Latif's time. However, as he puts in some verses, the days of the more competent professional spinners had already gone by".

"In *Sur Dahar*, a number of verses allude to the drying up of the deltaic Patihal channel of the Indus, which flowed through the western part of the present Badin district. The old name, 'Patihal,' has survived in the names of the present revenue Deh Tappa circles, in the area (to the south-west of Tarai). The allusions would indicate that this change in the courses of the lower deltaic channels of the Indus had taken place earlier and ruined the prosperity of the Chief Jasodhan Agro's principality. But Shah Abdul Latif had seen an old *kanda* tree still standing on the bank of the empty bed (*dhoro*) of the Pathial channel, and addressing it (in his verses) he inquired about the days when the Pathial was still a full-flowing channel".

"These and some such other allusions, to either situations or the changing way of life of the people, can be guessed from the *Risalo*. Some verses possibly give an indication of the external pressures being exerted on Shah Abdul Latif."

(Dr. N.A. Baloch: Life and Times of Shah Abdul Latif, 1985)

He was a man of quiet and unassuming disposition completely immersed in the interpretation of the ideas which absorbed the greater part of his attention and concentration. As a boy and young man he exhibited unusual traits. He was contemplative and thoughtful, fond of loneliness and loved to wander by himself. He found pleasure in passing his time with holy men and faqirs in an effort to un-

derstand the ideals which they strove to interpret. His fondness for retirement and seclusion and his setting-out upon travels in furtherance of contemplation follow the well-known lines of asceticism. 'Shah Abdul Latif's habit is closely parallel with that of Shaikh Musa, one of Abul Fazl's ancestors, who, according to the 'Ain-i-Akbari,' ever contemplative in his prayer carpet of introspection wrestled in prayer with himself and spent his previous days in the ordering of the wayward spirit', writes Dr. H.T. Sorley.

According to the oral tradition collected by numerous enquirers, the poet in his prime was a well-set-up, handsome, bearded man of average height with fine black eyes, an intelligent face, a noble forehead and the solemn look of a deep-thinking and penetrating mind overcast with thought. At Bhit are still preserved several relics of him; the long stick he used to use when walking, his turban, a piece of cloth he wore, and the beggar's bowl of coconut husk from which he ate and drank frugally.

The first years of his childhood and early boyhood were spent in and around Soec-Qandar, where he was born. It was situated in what is now Survey No. 134 of Deh Soec-Qandar Jagir of Taluka Shahdadpur, a few miles east of Bhitshah.

Some time later his father, Shah Habib, moved to live in a nearby village called Kotri Moghul which is in ruins today, and there, Shah Abdul Latif spent some of the years of his adolescence. That ascetic trend of his nature which led him to frequent the company of holy men and spend days by himself in solemn contemplation did not accord with the position which his father deemed due to his son. But the Shah showed his mettle by living his life in his own way. For a person of that age he was well travelled. It is true that he did not travel far, but he visited some of the lands adjoining Sindh and traversed a great part of Sindh in his quest for truth. In this way he brought to the practice of his poetry a breadth of view which he could not have shown had he remained continuously in the centre of the self-satisfied Sayyid society of those days established in the neighborhood of Matiyari and Hala.

Shah Abdul Latif was well acquainted with Arabic and Persian. It is certain that he was familiar with the Mathnavi of Rumi, a fine copy of which was presented to him by the then ruler of Sindh--Miyan Noor Muhammad Kalhor. The Holy Quran and the *Malfuzat Bayan-ul-Arfin* of his great grand-father, Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri also used to be with him at the Bhit as well as during his travels.

He used to read them with devotion and sometimes, his devoted disciples used to recite them for him. His poetry is a positive proof to that as there are so many references to the stories and anecdotes as mentioned in the Quran and the Mathnavi. But the major part of his poetry deals with the folk tales which Sindhi mothers sing to their children in their cradles. He, however, turned them into subtle psychological points shot through with the deep intricacies of sufi philosophy, as the colours shine in watered silk. He has proved his excellence in mystic poetry in direct line with the master poets of Persia-- Jalaludin Rumi(d.1273), and Mulla Jami (d.1492). Though he used much of the conventional phraseology of sufi thought, he is entirely original in his treatment of his subject matter.

It must, however, be clearly understood that Shah Latif is not a poet in the conventional sense of that term, for, he never wrote poetry. His method of expression was direct in the sense that all that we see in his Risalo was sung by him to the accompaniment of musical instruments and often enough in the presence of his devoted disciples and those distant admirers who used to collect at the Bhit from diverse parts of Sindh and the adjoining regions just to listen to his song, to be ennobled and invigorated by it.

The main characteristic of Shah Latif's poetry is that it is a remarkable record of a God-intoxicated man's longing to rise beyond his level of life in order to meet his Maker. Shah Latif is essentially a poet of love and longing.

Philosophy

Nature had planted a garden of rainbows in Shah Abdul Latif's imagination, it flickered, it blossomed, it burst forth into stars sprinkled with poetry, which has often been described as mysticism. That flower is mysticism is for research scholars to discuss, but that Shah is a poet of writhing in the agony of creation, that he was scared by a divine anguish, that he was the supreme artist, trying to discover not his own moorings, but an identity for the whole world, a meaning in existence and a joy in being, is a truth that glimmers in his poetical imagination.

This 'being' before Shah was purely symbolic. Existence is the exterior of some secret reality. A game of hide and seek is being played between the outer appearance and the ultimate reality. This sort of thinking, these questions, these doubts, these despairs led him to a subtle form of mysticism known as Pantheism. He delved

into folk stories, music and literature and from this realm of stories and anecdotes, he created symbols, which are universal, and eternal.

The underlined idea of all of the symbols, Shah Latif employs, is that the 'self' or 'being' is governed by a peculiar, strange and perhaps inexplicable dichotomy. In other words, existence is only a reflection, it is an echo. The reality lies somewhere else. That which fuses the shadow with the reality is principle of love. Love, in the world of Shah, is different from the doctrine of polarity presented by Leibnitz. In the world of Shah, it is not a negative pulled by a magnetic force towards the positive. Shah does not admit this demarcation. According to him, there is no diversity of poles, but a desire, a yearning, in multiple streams to merge in a confluence.

If one was to accept the doctrine of monadism then according to Shah, the chief monad is love. Thus we find that Sasui is merely a particle and Punhu is just simply another part. They are different monads. And yet it must be remembered that they are not different poles. This stands true of all stories and anecdotes taken up by Shah Latif, whether it be 'Lilan-Chanesar', 'Momal-Rano', 'Suhni-Mehar' or 'Noori-Jam Tamachi'. It must be borne in mind that they are mere symbols. They represent universal feelings. They are intensely opposite and yet they are inextricably intertwined. Some times it is the madness of love, sometimes it is the passion of jealousy, sometimes it is the agony of separation, sometimes it is the anguish of unrequited love, the wounds of wisdom, the sorrows of intellect, the sufferings of thought, the restlessness, indecision, the state of 'to be' or 'not to be', all this permeates in Shah Latif's poetry. He represents many feelings. He brings in multifarious shades of life, he asks many questions, but there is only one answer and this answer is implied.

He has one message for the entire humanity, and that is the prophecy of love. Love, according to Shah, is the harbinger of all source of oneness. This all being, all existence, all life draws its inspiration from the fountain spring of eternal love, and love knows only to create, to inspire, to heal and love.

His Risalo

The bulk of Shah Abdul Latif's poetry was collected and preserved by his followers in a compendium called the RISALO (The message). The whole *Risalo* is divided into chapters which are called the *surs*, a technical term of music, meaning 'modes of singing'.

The Message of the Master

The original manuscript copies of *Risalo* contain 36 *surs*, out of which 5 do not contain the poems of Shah Latif. From the point of composition, the poems are of two types: the *Bait* and the *Wa'ee*. The *bait*s (Ar. poems) which form the main body of Shah Abdul Latif's poetry, extend to seven or more verses all rhyming with one another except the last one in which rhyme occurs in the middle at the end of the first hemistich. These *bait*s are meant to be recited in a loud sonorous voice. The *Wa'ee* is simply an ingenious extension of the *bait* effected by the poet for the first time. Its first verse is the basic verse like that of the *Ghazal*, and is to be repeated after the recitation of each verse that follows. The number of verses in a *wa'ee* are generally not less than four and more than ten, and they all rhyme with one another at the ends. The *wa'ees* are meant to be sung after the recitation of the *bait*s.

New Music Tradition

Shah Abdul Latif's overwhelming popularity as a great poet has eclipsed his genius in music. Actually, poetry and music became synonymous with his art, his poems representing music in words. He was a composer of poetry and music at the same time. Since the revolution brought about by Amir Khusro (1255-1350 A.D.) in the theory and practice of *Hindustani* music, Shah Abdul Latif (1690-1751 A.D.) stands unique in his great vision of a new renaissance in the field of music. He was well-acquainted with the tradition of *Hindustani* music, its origin as well as its later development as is evident from the following historical data.

According to Dr. N.A. Baloch, Thatta, the old capital of Sindh, had been a centre of music and musicians from the very beginning of the Moghul period. During the reign of Akbar at the Centre and the Tarkhans in Sindh, music was so much in vogue in Thatta that, according to a competent authority, 'every home rebounded with sweet melodies and the rhythmic beats of the dholak'. This tradition had continued to Shah Abdul Latif's time, and the court of the Nawabs at Thatta continued to reflect new tastes and techniques in music, including those which originated at Delhi. The institution of *Hindustani* music, after its continuous development since the days of Amir Khusro, had reached its zenith during the Moghul period, and began to decline with the eclipse of the Moghul glory. Shah Abdul Latif lived during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48

A.D.) at whose court, the easy style and the more sophisticated forms in music had replaced the earlier vigorous style and more vital forms. Even Sufi music was dominated by the monotony of the *qawwali* style which had ceased to evolve.

In order to bring about a renaissance, Shah Abdul Latif founded an institution of music at Bhitshah by about a 1742 A.D, when he had permanently settled there. Shah practiced a new music tradition, invented a new instrument called *Danburo* (Ar. *Tambur*), trained musicians from amongst his followers to sing in the new style, detailed the bulk of his poems under different chapters which were called the *Surs*, and each *Sur* was specified by the *Ragni* and *Raga* in which it was to be sung. In order to enjoy the essence of music in calm and tranquility, the night was chosen for the practice and performance of the new music, the time having been fixed between the *Isha* and the *Fajr* prayers. During the last ten years of Shah's life, the new music and its mode of execution were perfected, and a trained group of musicians, under the leadership of his trusted disciple, Tamar faqir, was finally put in charge of this institution.

It is recorded by all the biographers of Shah Abdul Latif that shortly before his death, he retired into solitude. Coming out again, he performed his ablution, put on a white sheet and ordered the singing of songs. When the music stopped, he fell into a reverie of divine contemplation.

Shah Abdul Latif has been the subject of almost innumerable studies and hymnical praises (See Appendix---II). There are, however, only few critical appreciations of his muse and music. The Shah Abdul Latif Bhitshah Cultural Centre Committee has initiated an elaborate research-cum-publication programme besides completing others works related to the Bhitshah Complex.

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Appendix I

SOME IMPORTANT EVENTS OF THE LATIFIAN ERA

1555 A.D.	Accession of Turkhans. Sack of Thatta by Portuguese.
1558 A.D.	Martyrdom of Adam Shah Kalhoro, the founder of Kalhoro dynasty, in Multan Prison.
1590 A.D.	Death of Hazrat Makhdoom Noah of Hala.
1592 A.D.	Defeat of Mirza Jani Beg Turkhan and annexation of Sindh by Akbar.
1600 A.D.	'Tawarikh-i-Sindh' written by Mir Muhammad Ma'sum of Bakhar.
1605 A.D.	Rise of Daudpotas in Shikarpur and Upper Sindh.
1611 A.D.	Birth of Shah Lutfullah Qadri.
1613-14 A.D.	Visit of Nicholas Withington to Sindh.
1621 A.D.	'Tawarikh-i-Tahiri' written by Mir Tahir Muhammad Nasyani.
1621-26 A.D.	Birth of Miyun Shah Enayat Rizvi of Nasarpur.
1623 A.D.	Death of Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri, great grandfather of Shah Abdul Latif.
1625 A.D.	'Beglarnama' written by Amir Sayyid Qasim Beglar,
1636 A.D.	English Factory established at Thatta.
1642 A.D.	Visit of Manrique to Sindh.
1648-51 A.D.	Aurangzeb-Governor of Multan and Sindh.
1654-55 A.D.	'Turkhan-Nama' written by Sayyid Jamal.
1658 A.D.	Civil War between Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh ending in defeat of Dara Shikoh and his death after pursuit through Sindh.
	Siege of Bakhar. River War at Schwan.
	Kalhoro begin to oppose the Moghul troops.
1662 A.D.	English Factory in Sind given up.
1679 A.D.	Death of Shah Lutfullah Qadri.
1689 A.D.	Death of Khushhal Khan Khattak.
1690 A.D.	Exalted birth of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.
1691 A.D.	Death of Sultan Bahu.
1699 A.D.	Visit of Captain Hamilton to Sindh.
1701 A.D.	Yar Muhammad Kalhoro obtains grant from Aurangzeb.
	Death of Makhdoom Ghulam Mohammad Bugai.
	Defeat of the Daudpotas in Upper Sindh.
1709 A.D.	Death of Pir Hashim Shah, a mystic saint of Matiari who prophesied birth of Shah Abdul Latif.

- 1711 A.D. Yar Muhammad Kalhoru extends power in Upper Sindh. Death of Miyun Abul Hasan, author of 'Muqadama-tu-Salaat'.
- 1713 A.D. Birth of Khawaja Muhammad Zaman of Luari Sharif.
- 1718 A.D. Martyrdom of Shah Enayat of Jhok, the pioneer of 'Collective farming' in Sindh.
- 1719 A.D. Death of Yar Muhammad Kalhoru and Nur Muhammad Kalhoru becomes 'Khuda Yar Khan'.
- 1721 A.D. Death of Miyun Shah Enayat. Birth of Khawaja Mir 'Dard'.
- 1730-31 A.D. Shah Waliullah Dehlavi proceeds to Hajj via Lahore/Sindh.
- 1731-32 A.D. Death of Shah Habib, father of Shah Abdul Latif.
- 1732 A.D. Martyrdom of Makhdoom Abdul Rehman of Khuhra.
- 1736 A.D. Nur Muhammad Kalhoru becomes Subedar of Sindh.
- 1739 A.D. Birth of Abdul Wahab Faruqi 'Sachal Sarmast'.
- 1740 A.D. Nadir Shah invades Sindh which becomes subject to Persia. Birth of Sabitali Shah, the great 'marsia-goo' (elegy-poet) of Sindhi language.
- 1748 A.D. Death of Makhdoom Muhammad Mu'een Thattavi, a great sufi friend of Shah.
- 1750 A.D. Death of Muhammad Hayat Sindhi at Madina.
- 1750 A.D. Sindh becomes subject to Afghan Kingdom of Ahmad Shah Durrani.
- 1751 A.D. Death of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit.
- 1752 A.D. Death of Bulhe Shah, the 'Rumi of Panjab.'
- 1753 A.D. Death of Makhdoom Abdul Rauf of Hala.
- 1753 A.D. Ahmed Shah Durrani's Commdr. Jehan Khan invades Sindh: flight and death of Nur Mohammad Kalhoru, at Sarkhat Korhar in Jaisalmir.
- 1754 A.D. Construction of the Mausoleum of Shah Abdul Latif.
- 1756 A.D. Birth of Pir Syed Muhammad Rashed. Death of Khan-e-Arzu.
- 1757-58 A.D. Commotion and civil war in Sindh ending in ascendancy of Ghulam Shah Kalhoru. Death of Mukhdoom Muhammadi of Khuhra (Distt. Khairpur)
- 1758 A.D. English factory established at Thatta.
- 1761 A.D. Death of Mukhdoom Muhammad Hashim Thattavi.
- 1762 A.D. Death of Shah Walliullah Dehlvi.
- 1767 A.D. 'Tuhfat-al-Kiram' written by Ali Sher Qani'.
- 1768 A.D. Death of Makhdoom Ghulam Mohammad Bugai.
- 1769 A.D. Foundation of Hyderabad.
- 1772 A.D. Death of Ghulam Shah Kalhoru.
- 1773 A.D. Accession of Timur Shah at Kabul.

The Message of the Master

- 1774 A.D. Death of Khawaja Muhammad Zaman of Luari Sharif. Misgovernment in Sind. English factory at Thatta given up. Sarfraz Khan Kalhoro deposed for misgovernment.
- 1775 A.D. Martyrdom of Makhdoom Abdul Rahim Girhori. Ghulam Nabi Khan Kalhoro becomes ruler of Sindh.
- 1778 A.D. Civil war between Kalhora and Talpurs begins.
- 1781 A.D. Death of Rohal Faqir. Death of Mazhar Janjanaan.
- 1783 A.D. Battle at Halani between Kalhora and Talpurs.
- 1784 A.D. Martyrdom of Sayyid Muhammad Baqa Shah of Pir Jo Goth.
- 1788 A.D. Death of Mian Sahebdino Faruqui, grand-father of Sachal Sarmast.
- 1793 A.D. Death of Timur Shah.
- 1803 A.D. Ascendancy of Talpurs finally established.
- 1818 A.D. Death of Pir Muhammad Rashed of Pir Jo Goth.
- 1866 A.D. First Printing of the Risalo (Leipzig).

Appendix-II

SHAH ABDUL LATIF-A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

(i) Manuscripts of the Risalo

By now, more than three scores of manuscripts of the poetic compendium of Shah Abdul Latif are available besides more than two dozens of its printed editions. Since its first publication by Dr. Ernest Trumpp from Leipzig (Germany) in 1866, attempts have been made from time to time to study the contents and characteristics of the different available compendia of Shah's poetry with a view to compile a standard edition. These manuscripts differ from one another in internal details in so far as the number and sequence of poems or their textual readings are concerned as they are based on oral tradition. Some are duplicate copies of the earlier compilations while some lack historical authenticity. The maximum number of couplets (*abiyat*) recorded is 5885 and that of *Wa'ees* is 381. A considerable number of poems composed by other sufis/poets and recited by Shah himself or by others in his presence are also incorporated in these collections.

Dr. N.A. Baloch, a renowned scholar and a living authority on Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai has consulted some of the following manuscripts for preparing a standard edition of the Risalo, its first volume having been published by the Shah Abdul Latif Cultural Centre, Bhitshah (Sindh) in 1989 and the second volume is being issued this year. (K.B.K)

(1) Bhit Shah (*Ganj*); (2) Bulri; (3) Ahmadi; (4) Ibrahim Shah; (5) Pir Mithal Shah; (6) Jumo Faqir; (7) Faqir Hussain Bux; (8) Khair Muhammad; (9) Sayyid Dost Ali Shah; (10) Ramzan Jat; (11) Sher Muhammad Shah; (12) Mir Ali Ahmad Talpur; (13) Ghulam Taqi; (14) Muhammad Hanif Siddiqui; (15) British Museum, London; (16) Master Muhammad Qasim; (17) Muhammad Umer Khuhro; (18) Loung Faqir; (19) Thora Latni (Kutch); (20) Mai Muli Niamat; (21) Moulvi Hidayatullah Halai; (22) Mir Abdul Hussain 'Sangi'; (23) India office (London); (24) Abdul Karim Tabib Thattavi; (25) Capt. Stack; (26) Qazi Moosa; (27) Mansura Madressa; (28) Mir Iman Bakhsh; (29) Akhund Fazl Ali; (30) Akhund Muhammad Shafi; (31) Khair Muhammad Faqir Halai (32) Umedali Nizamani (33) Khairpur Talpurs (34) Naurangpoto; (35) Abdul

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Haq Halai; (36) Miyan Muhammad and Miyan Hussain; (37) Muhammad Salih 'Mujawar', (38) Miyan Noor Muhammad; (39) Pir Aali Shah; (40) Faqir Muhammad 'Qani'o'; (41) Jumo Faqir; (42) Ismail Rangrez; (43) Ghulam Shah Bhitai; (44) Mehar Faqir; (45) Wali Mohammad Shah; (46) Taj Muhammad Nizamani; (47) Muhammad Saleh Bhrani; (48) Punhal Faqir; (49) Ghaus Mohammad Shah.

The first manuscript is dated 1207 A.H. i.e 42 years after the death of the Shah (1165 A H/ 1751 A.D.), although a *Muntakhab* scribed by Faqir Hafiz Abubakar Memon is dated 1206 A.H.

(ii) Printed Editions of the Shah-Jo-Risalo.

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[Source: Sindh Historical Reference Library, Karachi]

تَن مِينُ مُحَمَّدُ كَارِنِ قَلْبِ سَانِ لِسَانِ. اَوْ فَايَمِ
فَرَمَانِ اَوْتِنِ كِه نَاوِلَتَا **بيت** اَوْتِنِ كِه نَاوِلَتَا سَتِنِ
وَنَا سَالَمِ. هِيكَ اِي هِيكَ تَتَا اَحَدِ سِ عَالَمِ. بِي عَمَّا
ضَالَمِ اِي كِنَا اِلَهَمِ **بيت** اِي كِنَا اِلَهَمِ نَسُو رُوِي
نُورِ. لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. بِي حِينِ كُونَدِ سُو
مُوِي كَسُو مَعْمُورِ اَنَّهُ اَزَلَمِ اُنْجِي **بيت** وَحَدَّ جِي
وَدِئَا اِلَا اَللهِ سِ اَوْرِي نِ. هِي حَقِيقَتِ كَذُّو حَرْبِ قَه
تَوْرِي نِ. مَعْرِفَتِ جِي مَاسِ ذِي سَانَدَرِ ذَوْرِي نِ سُو
نَسَا كَذِّهِ وَيَهِي نَوُورِي نِ. كَسُو كُورِي نِ
عَاشِقُ عَبْدِ اللّٰطِيفِ جِي **بيت** وَحَكَّ جِي وَدِئَا اِلَا اَللهِ
اَدَكِنَا. مُحَمَّدُ سُو لُجِي سِلْمَانِ تَتَا عَاشِقُ عَبْدِ اللّٰطِيفِ